

KUKAS

*The freedom
fighters
of the Panjab*

M. M. AHLUWALIA

SEVEN lakh brave Sikhs of the Panjab, known as Kukas (also as Namdharis or the Sant-Khalsas) offered the mightiest challenge to the paramount power in India in the post-Mutiny period. By expressing the intensity of their patriotism and the purity of their religion through constant striving and endless sacrifices, they chose the role of pioneers in creating the vision of a free India. Swadeshi, boycott and non-cooperation were not mere watch-words for them, but a way of life, so that liberty may spread its golden beams in the land. They tried to enlist the support of the princely states. They created their own postal system and judicial organization. They made important contacts with the Nepal ruler, and the Russians in Central Asia for patriotic purposes. And, they had to pay a heavy price. Scores of them were blown off by British guns. Many more suffered imprisonment, exile or sequestration. Satguru Ram Singh, the founder of the movement, was kept in exile and confinement in British Burma for about fourteen years.

The present volume by Dr. Ahluwalia, based mainly on some four hundred files of the Home and Foreign (Political) Departments of the Government of India, outlines the important role of the Kuka patriots in the freedom struggle of India.

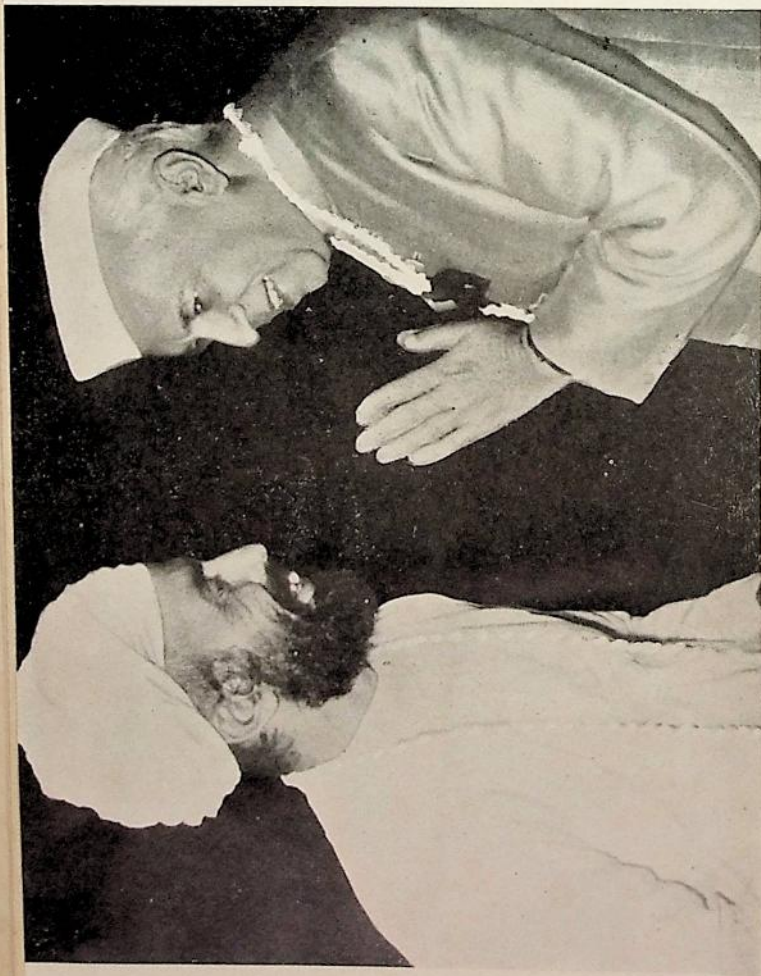
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Satguru Jagjit Singhji Maharaj (the present Namdhari Satguru) and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru when

Rs. 51,000 were presented for the N.D.F. — New Delhi 30 January 1967

K U K A S

The Freedom Fighters of the Panjab

by

M. M. AHLUWALIA

M. A., Ph. D.

(University of Delhi)



ALLIED PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LIMITED

BOMBAY — NEW DELHI — CALCUTTA — MADRAS
LONDON — NEW YORK

First Published 1965

ALLIED PUBLISHERS PRIVATE LTD

15, Graham Road, Ballard Estate, Bombay 1

13/14, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi 1

17, Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 13

38-C, Mount Road, Madras 6

REPRESENTATIVES ABROAD

GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN LTD

Ruskin House, Museum Street, London, W. C. 1

© *Allied Publishers Private Ltd.*, 1965

PRINTED IN INDIA

by M. H. Patwardhan at the Sangam Press Pvt. Ltd., Poona and Published
by R. N. Sachdev for Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 15, Graham Road,
Ballard Estate, Bombay 1.

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO
M. G. D. FRIENDS

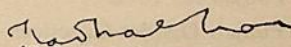
FOREWORD



RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN,
NEW DELHI-4.
राष्ट्रपति भवन,
नई दिल्ली-4।

August 5, 1964

A valuable introduction to
the history of Namdhari movement.
I hope it will be read widely.


(S. Radhakrishnan)

P R E F A C E

It is presumed there is not even one book on the subject which covers the Namdhari movement beyond the year 1872. In English, the present attempt is, perhaps, the first and the only one. This is being mentioned not to claim any undue credit. It is only to justify the excessive use of quotations from the original records as the present writer has done, since it was desirable to place all the facts about this outbreak beyond doubt at least once. The book has been written, more or less, on the basis of material available from the following sources:

1. Records and Proceedings of the Home-Public, Home Judicial and Home-Police Departments.
2. Records and Proceedings of the Foreign-Political (Secret) Departments.
3. Hansard Parliamentary Debates for 1872—Vol. CCIX.
4. Confidential Reports of the Native Newspapers in the Punjab for 1872.
5. Punjab District Gazetteer—for Ludhiana and Malerkotla—1888-89.
6. Parliamentary Paper No. 356 of 1872, Vol. 45, page 645.
7. Selections from (Political) Despatches from 1866 to 1867 from the Government of India to the Secretary of State and *vice versa*.
8. Interviews and Exchanges with Kukas including their present Guru Jagjit Singhji Maharaj.
9. Existing Namdhari Literature.
10. Some books on Sikh history as a whole.

The claim of the author is limited to the chapters relating to Kuka movement exclusively where every effort has been made to unearth new material, and to throw fresh light on

the subject. Some of the photos and photostats are being reproduced for the first time.

Another volume on this movement relating to the pontificates of Guru Hari Singhji, Satguru Pratap Singhji and the present Namdhari Guru, might be placed in the market as soon as the relevant records are made available.

The author is grateful to Allied Publishers for giving him their utmost co-operation and useful guidance in the production of this work. Also, the author feels greatly indebted to Dr. Radhakrishnan for writing the foreword.

6/7 Beadon Pura,
Ajmal Khan Road,
New Delhi-5

M. M. AHLUWALIA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE pre-‘mutiny’ period was politically one of darkness and gloom. The Mughal Empire had been destroyed province by province. The Marathas who wanted to be the successors of the Mughals had likewise been vanquished by the British. The ancient houses of the Rajput States including Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur and Bundi had become subservient to the imperial power of the British. The Gurkhas of Nepal had been befriended. Sitara, Nagpur, Jhansi and Oudh were shadowed by the Union Jack.

In the Panjab, the powerful State of Ranjit Singh in the trans-Sutlej regions, had checked the advance of the foreigners. It was guarded by the most well-trained and equipped Khalsa army. But its encirclement by the British had started when the Maharaja himself was alive. They were supported by the *cis*-Sutlej chieftains who enabled them to hang a sword on the neck of the Lahore State whenever they liked. They had turned Ferozepur as their forward military outpost.

In 1844, Sind was also gone and it was then being openly foretold: “The country of the five rivers would be ours.” Then followed the two Anglo-Sikh Wars (1845 to 1849) which resulted in the end of the Lahore State of the deceased Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The brave Khalsa army was broken up; citadels in the interior were pulled down; traitorous leaders were rewarded and the sleeping-pills of a new economic life were administered to the weary people of the Panjab.

Shortly afterwards, the murky sky burst into the storm of 1857, when the agonised heart of India made a mighty effort to cast off the handcuffs on its wrists and the weight of iron chains on its body. In the Panjab, the same *cis*-Sutlej chieftains, whose loyalty to alien imperialism was the only index of their manliness, became the camp follo-

wers and the standard-bearers of the British in this crisis. But for their help, perhaps, the sails of the imperial barge would have been completely torn to pieces, and it might have been entirely submerged.

The upheaval of 1857 was suppressed with untold brutality. Ten thousand Indians were put to death by hanging alone; yet the fire of revenge was not extinguished in the hearts of the rulers.

Religiously and socially, the condition of the land of the five rivers, as well as the rest of India was no better. Ever since the days of Banda Bairagi, the Sikh community stood divided. The passage of invaders like Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali through the Panjab, the nature of political activity under the Misldars, and the persecution of Sikhs by the Mughal Kings or their Governors, all these tended to produce social and religious indiscipline and moral laxity among the followers of Guru Gobind Singh.

The times of Ranjit Singh and his successors witnessed further landslides on the road of religion and morality. The Brahmanic influences, costly ceremonialism, emotional depravities, individual treacheries and violence, the practice of Sati, sale of daughters, infanticide, etc., became widespread.

And, in the Panjab, as in other provinces, the fiercest challenge came from Christianity in the post-annexation period. New churches were being built in the land of the Gurus. The jail gates were being opened to the 'Padris' to convert the convicts. Promotions were being offered to those who embraced Christianity. Even the young Prince Maharaja Dalip Singh was made to embrace the new faith. Social laws of property were being altered for the progress of an alien church. The sanctity of Har Mandir was endangered. Beef was being hawked about in the holy city of Amritsar under the laws of the Christian Government.

It was in the above political and religious circumstances that Kukatism was initiated in order to dispel darkness, to

denounce social weaknesses, to meet the challenge of an overpowering Western Imperialism, and to forge the bonds of religious purity and brotherhood.

In fact, a direct parallel is available in the circumstances of Guru Gobind Singh and the rise of the Kukas. Aurangzeb wanted to destroy the Hindu and Sikh faith and he aspired to subjugate all. Therefore, the Tenth Guru created the Khalsa as a sword in the hand of the Motherland. He reminded the Sikhs of their divine mission of warring incessantly for the extirpation of oppression. He declared: "To be a Khalsa is to be a Lion; is to tolerate no oppression; is to be a life-long warrior in the propagation of virtue."

Guru Gobind Singh had to face a triple challenge: of the corrupt and proud priests; the haughty Mughal Emperor; and the pro-Mughal hilly Rajas. The Kukas or the Sant-Khalsas of the 19th century had likewise to face similar challenges: of the internal evils represented by the priestly classes; the Christian imperialism; and the pro-British *cis*-Sutlej chieftains.

Impelled by similar circumstances, and inspired by the action of the Tenth Guru, the Namdhari Guru Ram Singh, a disciple of Guru Balak Singh of Huzroo, entered upon a similar resolve of religious purity and political freedom through the pathways of perpetual sacrifice and self-denial. Nearly one month before the outbreak of the rebellion of 1857, Guru Ram Singh raised a new flag to be upheld, uttered a new pledge to be fulfilled and saw a new vision to be realised.

The Kuka or the Namdhari Movements stood for religious revival at a time when Christianity was making serious inroads in the land. It represented social reforms, clean living, honest earning, equality and simplicity, when people in the Panjab had almost forgotten the message of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. It offered nothing but non-co-operation to the Government when many of the Sikh chieftains had become the helpless victims of lust

and greed by attracting the favours of the foreign masters through their debasing loyalty. It preached and practised Swadeshi when cotton duties in India were being abolished, and the markets of India were being flooded with goods of Lancashire and Manchester, besides the salt from Liverpool. It advocated protection of cows at a time when the British Government was establishing butcher-houses to flatter the Muslims as a part of their 'divide and rule' game.

The Namdhari followers avoided travelling by trains. They did not walk on the highways maintained by the authorities such as the Grand Trunk Road. They established their own postal system. Their confidential letters were "circulated much in the same fashion as the fiery cross was carried through by a Highland Clan in Scottish bygone days." They never enlisted themselves for Government service. They never accepted donations from the authorities. They had their distinctive head-gear and the white dress as a symbol of their purity, and as a sign of their abiding link with the ancient heritage of their country. In their manners they were polite and cultured. Their hospitality was proverbial.

In all possible ways they suffered; in all possible ways they strove and sacrificed so that the nation might be free, and the purity of religion might be established. They created powerful contacts with the Rajas of Kashmir and Nepal to enlist their support for the noble cause. They sent their emissaries to Russia during the Second Afghan War, and thus became the forerunners of many other patriots, namely, Rash Bihari Ghose and Subhash Chandra Bose, who likewise sought foreign support for the emancipation of the Motherland. The names of Kuka and Russian agents who were involved in such contacts are available in the Foreign-Political-Secret files of the Government of India, and make an interesting, absorbing reading. The most prominent amongst them were: Gurcharan Singh, Ram Charan Tora, Narain Das, Maya and Shankar Rai. By the year 1883, the Kukas and the Russians

had fixed between themselves the 'Pass-Word', 'Red' and 'White.'

Such were the potentialities of the Kuka Movement which the British had to deal with in the second half of the 19th century. They had taken notice of this movement in the year 1863, and had been compelled to impose many restrictions. In spite of these precautions, the movement gathered momentum, and the followers of Guru Ram Singh went on multiplying. The first serious warning was conveyed to the Government of the Panjab in September 1866 when Col. R. G. Taylor, Commissioner of Ambala wrote:

"It is my thorough belief that these lads (Kookas) mean war sooner or later."

Upon this, the first intimation of the Kuka "sect" was sent to the London authorities on 8th October, 1866, by the Government of India.

Two years afterwards (in 1868), an Englishman by the name of Mr. Donovan warned Governor-General Lawrence of the coming storm. He wrote: "The plant is yet tender and can be bent at pleasure; hereafter it will not yield." It is interesting to know that the Commissioner of Ambala as well as the above Englishman both warned the Government that: "Guru Gobind raised men and money in precisely the same manner."

After this the British Government was always vigilant. Its secret agents were actively in pursuit of 'Spirits Rebellious.' The Namdharis, on their part, were all too ready as well. Whenever the Goddess of Liberty demanded its price and quivered its thirsty lips, Guru Ram Singh and his followers offered cupfuls of blood. They were treated by the Government like criminal tribes; they were blown off with guns; they were exiled by the foreigners and defamed by many of their own kinsmen; they were deprived of their properties and ploughs.

Yet they survived. With confidence and courage they wrote a story that can never grow old. With the dew-drops

of self-sacrifice, they put an indelible mark on the pages of our history. In their glorious struggle patriotic India, led by Gandhiji, found its greatest weapons, namely, Swadeshi and non-co-operation for a crusade against foreign rule.

Such a powerful movement deserved better notice from the scholars and writers of Indian History. But, perhaps, the difficulties were obvious. Firstly, the control of Sikh affairs and Sikh history, ever since the days of this movement, have been in such hands who could never be reconciled to the cause represented by this movement. Most of them were "faithfuls" who gloried in the name of Great Britain. Secondly, much of the history and facts of this movement lay buried in the secret files of the Home Department and the Foreign-Political Departments of the Government of India. It was impossible to consult these files so long as British rule survived.

After 1947, the scholarly and sustained effort that was needed to unearth this new wealth was not forthcoming except in dribblets. Thirdly, the Kukas themselves were too modest and cultured to crave any credit and limelight. They shunned English education, as well as researches in their own past through the medium of foreign education. Some valuable efforts in this direction were, however, made by writers like Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, Sant Inder Singh Chakrawarti and Sardar Nahar Singh, M. A.

The present writer came across certain Kuka files in the records of the Home Department while writing a thesis on the "Freedom Movement of India 1858-1909," for the award of Ph.D. degree. Thus, his interest in the movement was awakened and he always felt inclined to attempt a scholarly survey of the whole movement, particularly its place in the freedom struggle of our country. Hence this book.

In the writing of this work, the writer had the privilege to go through all those secret and confidential files of the Government of India, in the Home, Foreign and Political Departments, which related to this movement. Some of the



Satguru Jagjit Singh (the present Namdhari Guru).

original letters of Guru Ram Singh, written in exile, are being reproduced for the first time. The existing Namdhari (Kuka) literature was also carefully studied.

Guidance and light was also sought from the present Kuka leader Satguru Jagjit Singhji Maharaj about many points relating to this movement; the Namdhari centres in Ludhiana and Hissar Districts were visited to assess the historic importance of the Kuka movement. In fact, it would have been quite difficult to give final shape to this work without the blessings of the present Namdhari Guru, to whom the writer will always remain beholden.

CHAPTER II

SIKHS—THE AGE-LONG SUFFERERS —THE AGE-LONG MARTYRS (1469-1839)

It is All in Accordance With God's will and therefore
Affords Me Pleasure— GURU ARJUN DEV (Martyrdom)

THE NAMDHARIS were essentially Sikhs, and they drew inspiration from the Sikh Gurus, more especially Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The teachings of Guru Nanak and the heroic struggles of Guru Gobind Singh conditioned all their activity as well as their mental framework. Therefore, it will not be out of place to make a brief survey of Sikhism and its history.

The circumstances in the 14th and 15th centuries were quite conducive to the growth of a *great religion*. The Hindus were suffering from their own superstition, numerous gods, ceremonialism, as well as from the onslaughts of aggressive Islam. In the words of Sir Gokal Chand Narang: "The spring of religion had been choked by the weeds of unmeaning ceremonial, debasing superstition, selfishness of the priests and indifference of the people. Form had supplanted reality and the high spiritual character of Hinduism had been buried under the ostentatious paraphernalia of sects."

The caste feeling amongst the Hindus dominated their behaviour. It was in such circumstances that the Bhakti movement grew up as a result of the interaction between Hinduism and Islam. This movement stood for fundamental equality of all religions and the unity of god-head. It conveyed a new message to the unlettered masses through its simple and understandable language. It stood for the dignity of man and laid down that it depended on his actions and not birth. It protested against excessive ritualism of the Hindus. Among the prominent Bhakti saints may be mentioned Ramanand, Chaitanya, Nam Deva and Kabir. In the Panjab, Guru Nanak stood supreme.

Guru Nanak was born in the year 1469 at Talwandi in the house of a Khatri. He made a thorough study of the 'Kuran' and the 'Puranas'. From his very childhood he possessed a reflective mind. He was deeply influenced by the teachings of Kabir. Kabir had laid stress on the richness of mind, inner purity, sublime consciousness as well as good actions. He had said:

"Make thy mind thy Kaaba, thy body its enclosing temple, conscience its prime teacher;
sacrifice wrath, doubt and malice;
make patience thine utterance of the five prayers;
The Hindus and the Muslims have the same Lord."

In the same way Guru Nanak told the Mussalmans the value of good action. He said:

"Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer carpet;
what is just and lawful thy Kuran, modesty thy circumcision;
civility thy fasting, so shalt thou be a Mussalman."

Guru Nanak possessed a pious disposition. He prayed in solitude. He travelled widely in all directions. He reclaimed the fallen mortals in the hills of Gorakhmata; in the valleys of Kashmir and Kailash; in the deserts of Multan and Taulamba; in the jungles of Kamroop, and around the temples of Hardwar and Jagan Nath. He toured Mecca and Baghdad. In all these places he preached but did not hurt the feelings of even those whom he criticised.

Guru Nanak laid great stress on the value of *Karma*, the need of a Guru, the principle of self-surrender, as well as simplicity of life. He felt God could be obtained only through divine grace and through the guidance of a true Guru. He did not preach renunciation of the world as was being done by many other saints of the Bhakti cult. He told people to "Abide pure, amidst the impurities of the world." Guru Nanak was very keen on preaching equality, worship of one God and the oneness of Hinduism and Islam.



Guru Nanak was able to gather a large number of followers through his earnest piety and persuasive eloquence. According to Cunningham: "Nanak combined the excellences of preceding reformers, and he avoided the more grave errors into which they had fallen." He loftily invoked God as the One, the Sole and the Timeless Being.

Cunningham has ably recorded: "Nanak extricated his followers from the accumulated errors of ages and enjoined upon them devotion of thought and excellences of conduct as the first duties. He left them erect and free, unbiased in mind and unfettered by rules, to become an increasing body of truthful worshippers."

The effect of Guru Nanak's teachings was really electrifying. A large number of people whom Hinduism did not give a place within its fold, were saved from the clutches of Islam. The age-long bonds of caste were loosened. The spirit of intolerance and hatred between religions was broken. Even the Muslims were drawn towards the great personality of Guru Nanak. It may be that he was only a great reformer and not a rebel from Hinduism; nevertheless his reforms produced a revolution with far-reaching effects. He did not proclaim a new religion but the ultimate result was not less than that.

THE NEXT THREE GURUS

In the time of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Dass and Guru Ram Dass, Sikhism advanced further towards perfection in its various attributes, both moral and material. The Gurmukhi alphabet was developed and given a religious and literary importance. The sayings and hymns of Guru Nanak were collected. His biography was also compiled with the help of his constant companion, Bala, whose services were specially requisitioned for the purpose. The institution of *langar* (free common kitchen), started in the days of Guru Nanak, was enlarged. It served to break the bonds of caste. It provided an asylum for the hungry and the poor. According to Indu Bhushan Bannerji, it

also "proved a powerful aid in propaganda work" for the spread of Sikhism.

The famous Manji System was introduced. In all, 22 Bishoprics were created in the Panjab and a pious and devoted Sikh was appointed as the bishop or "Manji" in each region for strengthening the foundations of Sikh religion, and for conveying the message of the Guru to the congregations in all parts of the Panjab.

The Sikhs, during the period, were also given their distinctive, simple and inexpensive social ceremonies, besides their places of pilgrimage so that they may be saved from those Brahmanic influences which were costly as well as demoralising.

In this way, the period under the pontificates of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Dass and Guru Ram Dass was one of consolidation. It was during this time that Sikhism established its new identity and appeared as a stream distinct from Hinduism.

GURU ARJAN

Up to the time of Akbar, the Mughal-Sikh relations were not only smooth but cordial. Babur was said to have repented of his misdeeds after meeting Guru Nanak. Humayun sought the blessings of Guru Angad for the restoration of his lost crown. Akbar took food in the *langar* of the third Guru and remitted taxes as recommended by the Sikh Gurus. He made a grant of 500 *bighas* of land to the fourth Guru in 1577 where the holy city of Amritsar sprang up.

Guru Arjan succeeded his father in the year 1581. He understood perfectly the wide import of the teachings of Nanak and realised "how applicable they were to every state of life and to every condition of society." He compiled the *Adi Granth* and gave to Sikhism its holy scripture for all times to come. This work was executed in the most systematic manner. Its compilation was symbolic of the tolerance of the new faith. The Holy Granth included not only the sayings of the previous Gurus but also of more than a dozen saints of the Bhakti movement. For this purpose

pose the Guru enlisted the support of great scholars, singers and musicians. Even Akbar was interested to hear portions of this holy Granth and he greatly appreciated its contents. He visited the Guru a number of times. Cunningham has rightly put it: "During the Ministry of Arjan, the principles of Nanak took a firm hold on the minds of his followers."

With the succession of Jehangir, the Mughal-Sikh relations deteriorated. The new Mughal Emperor's attitude towards Guru Arjan was quite different as he himself outlines it in his biography *Tuzk-i-Jehangiri*. Prithi Chand and Chandu Shah conspired against the Guru to instigate the Mughals. When the Guru refused to accept the hand of Chandu's daughter for his son, he warned the Guru in a letter: "There are now sparks flying about. If they increase there will be a blasting fire which it will be difficult to extinguish."¹

Jehangir himself imposed a fine on the Guru for helping his rebellious son. But the Guru refused to pay saying: "I shall not give thee even a *Kauri*, for a fine is imposed on wicked worldly persons."² He was handed over to his enemy Chandu Shah who got him tortured for five days continuously. He was threatened to be enclosed alive in the rawhide of a cow, which was perhaps the most unbearable thing for the Guru. The Guru died singing and saying: "It is all in accordance with God's Will, and therefore affords me pleasure.... God is the strength of the strengthless."

GURU HARGOBIND

Jehangir had wounded the heart of a noble people who, through the sacrifice of their Guru were overnight transformed from saints into *soldier-saints*. "The temper and the circumstances of Hargobind both prompted him to innovation; he had his father's death to move him." He grasped the sword, declared himself the Spiritual and the Political Head of his sect, assumed royal attributes, raised

¹ See Macauliff, Vol. 3 and 4, p. 80.

² *Ibid.*, p. 91.

an army and maintained a stable of about 800 horses. He had a Guard-brigade of sixty match-lockmen to secure the safety of his person. Hundreds of mounted followers were in constant attendance upon him. He erected fortifications, promoted martial exercises, and built a retreat at Kiratpur in the hills. After the death of Jehangir, the Mughal-Sikh relations were more or less on a military footing. Guru Har-gobind fought many engagements against the Mughals in the time of Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan tried to stop his religious activity. He got the Sikh Baoli (Tank) at Lahore filled up. The Guru's horses were misappropriated by the Lahore Governor. All this led to skirmishes. The Guru killed such Muslim officers as Lalla Khan, Abdulla Khan, Kamar Beg and Painsa Khan, who were sent to punish the Sikhs from time to time. All these victories added to the prestige of the Guru.

At the same time, the sixth Guru did not neglect religious duties. He preached Sikhism up to Kashmir. He went as a pilgrim to the places connected with the lives of previous Gurus and built religious houses there.

THE SIKH GURUS AND AURANGZEB

Sikhism met a far more serious challenge when Aurangzeb came to the throne in 1658. Guru Har Rai was harassed by him and Guru Harkishan, a mere child of five, was summoned to the Imperial Court at Delhi where he died of smallpox. The intrigues of Ram Rai with Aurangzeb made the situation more complicated and difficult for the Sikhs.

The main victim of Aurangzeb's fanaticism was Guru Tegh Bahadur. He was summoned to Delhi "*as a pretender to power and as a disturber of the peace.*" But he was deftly saved by Rama Raja³ who took him to Bengal and Assam on a military expedition. In Assam, the Guru meditated on the banks of Brahmaputra and is said to have converted the King of Assam. When he returned to the Panjab

³ He was the son of Aurangzeb's famous Rajput general Mirza Raja Jai Singh.

the hostility of Ram Rai once again made him a victim of Aurangzeb's intolerance.

Cunningham wrongly alleges that *the Guru and his disciples subsisted on plunder and the Guru levied forcible contributions from rich Hindus* and it was for this reason that he was arrested and put to death on Aurangzeb's orders.

But this story is rightly refuted in the works of Macauliff. According to him, Aurangzeb tempted the Hindus with wealth, loaded them with taxes, threatened execution, burnt their sacred threads, pulled down temples, slaughtered cows—all this to convert them into Muslims. The Guru resisted this and successfully defeated his efforts. He encouraged the Brahmans of Kashmir to stick to their religion. All this led to his martyrdom in the year 1675.

The second version is credit-worthy. Nothing better could be expected from a King who had murdered his brothers and his nephew, and who had kept his own father a prisoner for more than eight years (1658-1666).

GURU GOBIND SINGH

The Ninth Guru had died with the words: "I have given my head and not my determination." Naturally his martyrdom inspired the Sikhs with ideas of resolute struggle and fighting. An open conflict with the Mughals became inevitable. The Tenth Guru prepared his followers with zest and foresight. He gave them courage, confidence and tenacity of purpose. He wrote a new chapter of Sikh history, and wrote it on the granite of time. In fact, the greatest work of Guru Gobind was the creation of the Khalsa in 1699. He thundered: "I want to soak this sword in the blood of man. The insatiable Goddess of Duty demands a bloody sacrifice! Is there anyone amongst you who will tear his heart out, and pour forth his blood instantaneously to propitiate this 'hungry Goddess?'" The effect of these words was tremendous. The first five who offered themselves completely to the Guru were (1) Daya Ram (Khatri), (2) Dharam Chand (Jat), (3) Mohkam

(barber), (4) Sahib (washerman), and (5) Himmat (water carrier). Within a few days, 80,000 people offered themselves as complete disciples of Guru Gobind Singh, ready at any time to surrender their everything at his commands. He had asked them for Kul-Nash, Krit-Nash, Karam-Nash, Dharam-Nash and Rit-Nash. The importance of his work cannot be over-stated:

“In the heart of a powerful empire he set himself the task of subverting it; from the midst of social degradation and religious corruption, he called up simplicity of manners, singleness of purpose and enthusiasm of desire.... He thought that the minds of men might be wrought upon to great purpose... and he believed time had come for another teacher to arouse the latent energies of the human will. His memory was filled with the deeds of primeval seers and heroes, and his imagination dwelt on successive dispensations for the instruction of the world....”⁴

Guru Gobind Singh was not only a great soldier, the creator of the Khalsa, the mighty warriors, the lions, but he was also a great saint and a scholar. His Hindi verses and many literary works give him a high place among prose and verse writers. His courage was indomitable which he passed on to his followers for all time to come. His sacrifices were supreme. He had already lost his father. In his own words, he wedded his four sons to the bride of Death. Yet there was no tear but determination in his eyes and in his heart. He wrote to Aurangzeb: “Of what use is it putting out a few sparks when you raise a mighty flame *instead*?” He refused to co-operate with the imperialists and he wrote to Aurangzeb: “What to say of coming to you and co-operating with you, I would not like to walk on the road on which a serpent like you walks.” The same sentiments he passed on to his disciples, including the Kukas. He wrote poems to Chandi, the Goddess of power and purity

⁴ S. R. Sharma, *The Crescent in India*, 605.

(Adi-Shakti), and he initiated the practice of 'Devi-pujan.' This was followed and continued by the Kukas.

BANDA BAIRAGI

The mighty Sikh movement of struggle and resurrection continued even after Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh entrusted this task to his disciple Banda Bairagi who took a terrible revenge on the Mughals. At Sirhind, and at many other places, he made extensive military conquests, and at one time the whole country from Lahore to Panipat lay practically at Banda's feet. Banda was ultimately captured by the Mughals, and tortured to death. His flesh was pulled out with red-hot pincers. Thousands of his followers also suffered likewise. According to Cunningham: "Hundred Sikhs were put to death daily, contending among themselves for priority of martyrdom."⁵

The achievements of Banda were high in the military sense. According to G. C. Narang, "His successes gave Sikhism a prestige and a power which had never yet been associated with it.... His personal magnetism too was great and his undaunted courage and extraordinary valour knit his followers closely to him. The fact that not a single Sikh out of thousands captured and executed by the Mughal Government, renounced his faith to save his life was no less due to the exemplary piety and lofty character of Banda than to the inspiration of his predecessor. Guru Gobind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the sword and had set the seal of his sanction on war and bloodshed, if the cause of justice and righteousness could not be otherwise vindicated. The Guru had enunciated principles; Banda put them into practice. Gobind Singh had destroyed the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism, Banda completely broke the charm of its invincibility. The Hindus, after centuries of subjugation had realised under Banda that they could still fight and conquer, and when he fell, the dreams of Khalsa supremacy

⁵ *History of the Sikhs*, 79.

inspired by Gobind Singh were considerably near the point of realisation.”⁶

The critics of Banda also point out towards his drawbacks. According to Cunningham: “He did not perhaps comprehend the general nature of Nanak’s and Gobind’s reforms And he endeavoured to introduce changes into the modes and practices enjoined by these teachers.”⁷ It is true Banda introduced new innovations which completely divided the Sikhs and produced a strong element of weakness and disruption. This is why when he died the Sikhs were without a leader and without unity.

THE SIKHS — 1716-1738

“The history of Sikhism from the fall of Banda Bairagi to the permanent occupation of Lahore by the Sikhs in 1768 A.D. is a most chequered one. It is a record of life and death struggle between the declining power of the Mughals and the rising state of the Khalsa.” There were many ups and downs in the lives of the Sikhs and there were many political cross-currents, namely, the weight of the Mughal persecution, the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali as well as the rise of so many chieftains in their own ranks.

The Mughal King Farrukhsiyar oppressed them with his orders to shoot at sight. “Hundreds fell victims every day to the bigotry and fanaticism of the Mughal rulers.” Their temple at Amritsar was blown up many times. It was used as a stable and a slaughter house by the enemies of Sikhism. On 5th February, 1762 Ahmed Shah Abdali made a sudden attack and killed 20,000 Sikhs. Prices were laid on their heads and whenever a Sikh was caught, death was the only result. In those days when a mother was asked about the number of her children, she would shoot back a reply that she had four sons but one had become a Sikh. So close was the tie of the Sikhs with death. Cunni-

⁶ *Transformation of Sikhism*, 112.

⁷ Cunningham, 79.

ingham has also recorded: "An active persecution was kept up against the Sikhs whose losses in battle had been great and depressing."

There were certain redeeming features as well. The invasion of Nadir Shah broke the power of the Mughal Governors in the Panjab and the Mughal King at Delhi. When Nadir Shah returned there was a political vacuum in which the Sikhs walked in from their hilly hideouts. No persecution could finish that light which Guru Gobind Singh had produced in their hearts and that flame which Banda Bairagi had kindled through his vigorous actions. It has been recorded by a famous writer (Malcolm):

"The Sikh nation throughout their early history have always appeared like a suppressed flame but rise into higher splendour from every attempt to crush them."⁸

Out of all these massacres, trials and executions, they emerged victorious. They were organised by able leaders like Nawab Kapoor Singh and Jassa Singh Ahluwalia in *Dal Khalsas* or *Misls*. Jassa Singh even captured Lahore. Side by side, a feeling grew amongst them that they were a nation and not a mere band of robbers against the constituted law of the Mughal Government. They began to feel that they had as much right to the kingdom as any Mohammedan, whom they considered only as intruders and usurpers. Cunningham acknowledges the same fact in the following words:

"Thus, at the end of the two centuries, had the Sikh faith become established as a prevailing sentiment and guiding principle to work its way in the world. Nanak disengaged his little society of worshippers from Hindu idolatry and Mohammedan superstition, and placed them free on a broad basis of religious and moral purity; Amar Das preserved the infant community from declining into a sect of quietists or ascetics; Arjan gave his increasing followers a written rule of conduct and a civil organi-

⁸ Quoted by G. C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, 141.

sation; Hargobind added the use of arms and a military system; and Gobind Singh bestowed upon them a distinct political existence and inspired them with the desire of being socially free and nationally independent.”⁹

The Actions of Misldars

Misldars were a powerful projection of Guru Gobind Singh's personality, principles, aims and ideals, although the final flowering took place in the shape of the glorious kingdom established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The Sikhs during this period were successful because of “tenacity of purpose and resourcefulness of mind,” as Dr. H. R. Gupta puts it. Moreover the Marathas and the Mughals had been eliminated and the Sikhs had to contend only against the Afghans who had no permanent designs to settle down in India. The Sikhs avoided pitched battles. The Governor of Lahore said to Nadir Shah, “Their houses are their saddles.” Nadir Shah was greatly impressed by their fighting qualities. He saw the Sikh cavalymen emerge from behind the bushes, shoot their muskets and vanish before his troops even loaded their guns. He warned the Muslim Governor of Lahore that the Sikhs might one day replace him in the Panjab.

RANJIT SINGH

It was under Ranjit Singh that the *Misl* system achieved its final aim, and the dream of Guru Gobind Singh about the Commonwealth of the Khalsa became a political possibility. Ranjit Singh evolved a kingdom when he was surrounded by opponents and enemies. There were the hostile feudal aristocrats of the *cis*-Sutlej States, who were not touched by any sense of nationality, patriotism or unity. There were the Pathan rulers of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar, and the Dogras and Gurkhas on his boundaries in the early period. There were also the British imperialists who had practically finished all other contenders in

⁹ Cunningham, 80.

the Eastern, Western and Central regions of India. In such circumstances, Ranjit Singh began his political career and carved out a magnificent Empire and the most extensive Khalsa State with the help of able generals such as Mohkam Chand, Dewan Chand, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Hari Singh Nalwa and Akali Phoola Singh. He conquered the three Muslim provinces of Kashmir, Multan and Peshawar and wiped off many small States inside the Panjab. He was himself a great soldier. Griffin calls him the "beau ideal of a soldier, strong, spare, active, courageous and enduring." He was a great rider. Once he covered in one single day the distance from Lahore to Jhelum.

He raised the most powerful army, having units of Gurkhas, Biharis Uriyas, Panjabi Musalmans, Pathans and Sikhs. He employed a hundred foreigners — Germans, French, Italians, Irish and Greek, to drill his troops. But these foreigners left the Sikh side as soon as the Maharaja died. Not one of them fought for the Sikh cause in the Anglo-Sikh wars that followed within ten years of the Maharaja's death.

The Maharaja was the most liberal and tolerant ruler after Akbar. He pressed into his service people of many nationalities and religions. The Brahmins and Khattris, Tiwanas and Kharrals, Dogras and Diwans, Biharis and Poorbias, Jats and Aroras, Rajputs and the Pathans — all these were fitted into the conception of his Commonwealth.

Personally, the Maharaja was immensely popular with his soldiers and civil subjects. None of his officers played false with him so long as he lived. His hold upon the people was remarkable. He was illiterate like Akbar and also equally sagacious, tolerant, ready to reward talent irrespective of caste or religion. He ruled over his subjects with paternal love. He was intensely religious-minded, and heard daily verses from the Granth, sought blessings of holy men before undertaking military expeditions, and made rich offerings to the Har Mandir. He regarded himself "a mere drum of the commonwealth of the Khalsa." His seal carried the word 'Akal Sahai.'

He spent lavishly on the temples of Jwala-mukhi and Tarn Taran. Nevertheless, the Maharaja had some weaknesses such as for wine, women and dancing girls.

His relations with the English depict his fear-complex. He went on surrendering: in the year 1806 when Holkar came to Panjab and took shelter in his city; in 1809 when he was compelled to stop the process of unification through the *cis-Sutlej* States; in 1835 when Ferozepur was occupied by the English; in 1836 when the English compelled him to withdraw his force from Shikarpur; and in 1838 when he had to join the tripartite alliance much against his wishes. In fact, he postponed a war with the English which was inevitable, and shifted its responsibility on to the shoulders of his weak successors. This was perhaps due to the influence of Faqir Aziz-ud-din.

Although the State of Maharaja Ranjit Singh disappeared within 10 years of his death, yet the Sikhs never forgot the glory which they had enjoyed and experienced due to the great Maharaja. It was his rule of forty years which every Sikh considers as the year of Khalsa sovereignty till this day. Many Sikh patriots including the Namdharis tried to regain that sovereignty for the Sikhs and the rest of the country.

CHAPTER III

THE MARCH OF ALIEN IMPERIALISM OVER THE PANJAB

We Can only Consider Our Relations with Lahore State
to be those of an Armed Truce.

Lord Ellenborough

20 April 1844

The Maharaja Dalip Singh, will, by the Guru's Grace
be Firmly Established in His Kingdom, and the Cow and
Brahmin will be Protected ... Khalsaji Gird up Your
Loins

Sikh Proclamation from

Multan—1848

MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH died in the year 1839, and there followed a period of confusion, insecurity and violence around the throne of the Lahore State. In such circumstances it was not unnatural for the English [to realise what they had cherished for a long time. Sir Macnaughton and others had already proposed the dismemberment of the Panjab in their anxiety to give Peshawar to Shah Shuja. In the year 1843, the English offered to march their troops into the capital of Lahore in order to disperse the uncontrollable Khalsa Army. In the years 1844-45, the English were preparing boats at Bombay in order to lay bridges across the river Sutlej. They had increased their troops in Sind, and had better equipped them for a march upon the province of Multan which belonged to the Lahore State. Similarly, their garrisons in the North-Western Provinces were being strengthened. In the autumn of 1845, the bridge-boats from Bombay arrived and Major Broadfoot sent these towards the banks of Sutlej with strong guards of solidiers. There were about 70 boats of 35 tons each.

In such circumstances, the Khalsa Army was bound to become restless. They also began to prepare. They were

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encouraged by Lal Singh and Tej Singh, and also by Rani Jindan because all the three knew that if the Khalsa Army struck against the English power it would be weakened and dispersed and their respective positions would be secure. According to Cunningham: "Had the shrewd committees of the armies observed no military preparations of the English, they would not have heeded the insidious exhortations of such mercenary men as Lal Singh and Tej Singh...."¹

Another provocation was provided to the Khalsa Army when the Sikh villages near Ludhiana were placed under sequestration. It will not be out of place to mention that all these steps on the part of the English were the result of a premeditated design on the Panjab.

Encouraged by their selfish leaders and provoked by British preparations, the Khalsa Army became equally provocative and alert. Broadfoot reported in his letter dated the 14th July, 1845: "New guns have been purchased, carriages are being repaired, ammunition is also under preparation and stores of every kind, muskets and swords also with gunpowder are ordered to be bought or manufactured in large quantities."² The Khalsa soldiers became so agitated and inspired that they shouted:

"We will not only drive the English back to Calcutta, but as far back as London."³

As a result, the Khalsa Army crossed the river Sutlej and the first Anglo-Sikh War started in which the important engagements of Mudki, Ferozeshah and Sabraon were fought. It is useless to describe the details of these battles but it is important to note that all the battles in the Anglo-Sikh war were fought under the dark shadows of treason and treachery, which has been so beautifully exposed by writers like Cunningham. About the engagement of Mudki, Cunningham writes:

"The object, indeed, of Lal Singh and Teja Singh was

¹ Cunningham, 257

² *Secret Consultation*, 15th August, 1845, No. 34.

³ *Twarikh-i-Guru Khalsa*, 238.

not to compromise themselves with the English by destroying an isolated Division but to get their own troops dispersed by the converging forces of their opponents. Their desire was to be upheld as the Ministers of a dependent kingdom by grateful conquerors and they thus deprecated an attack on Ferozepore and assured the local British authorities of their secret and efficient goodwill."⁴

Compared to their treachery may be mentioned the heroism of the Khalsa soldiers. Cunningham records again:

"Every Sikh considered the cause as his own, and he would work as a labourer as well as carry a musket, he would drag guns, drive bullocks, lead camels, and load and unload boats with a cheerful alacrity which contrasted strongly with the inapt and sluggish obedience of mere mercenaries, drilled, indeed, and fed with skill and care, but unwarmed by one generous feeling for their country or their foreign employers. The youthful Khalsa was active and strong of heart."⁵

It was in the above circumstances that Lal Singh who headed an attack upon the English simply escaped, leaving his soldiers "to fight as their undirected valour might prompt." The Sikhs were repulsed.

The same story of treachery and bad faith was repeated by Tej Singh in the battle of Ferozeshah. In spite of his treachery, the Khalsa soldiers offered a very strong resistance and a terrible contest; so much so that the British "Colonels, knew not what had become of the regiments they commanded." Cunningham has recorded that: "in a few hours the 5,000 children of a distant land found that their art had been learned and that an emergency had arisen which would tax their energies to the utmost. On that memorable night the English were hardly masters of the ground on which they stood. . . ."⁶ Due to the treachery of Tej Singh, the British won again. But the victors had

⁴ Cunningham, 263.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

lost a seventh of their numbers and were completely paralysed; they also realised how inferior was their cannon as compared to that of the Khalsa. The same treachery was repeated in the battle of Aliwal by Ranjor Singh, and the same heroism was displayed by the Khalsa soldiers. According to Cunningham: "The ground was very thickly strewn with the bodies of the victors horsemen (Englishmen) than of the beaten infantry."⁷

The climax of treachery and heroism in the ranks of the Khalsa army was reached in the battle of Sobraon with which the first Anglo-Sikh war ended. Before the battle started, the Khalsa soldiers had already been betrayed by the Lahore Darbar through the traitor Gulab Singh. An understanding had been reached that the Khalsa Army would be attacked by the English, and it would be openly disowned by its own Government. The passage of the English forces across the Sutlej would be unopposed, and the road to the capital of Lahore would be laid open for them. It was, according to Cunningham, "under such circumstances of discreet policy of shameless treason" that the battle of Sobraon was fought. During the course of the battle the conduct of Tej Singh was that of a traitor and Cunningham addresses him with the same epithet: "The traitor Tej Singh, ... fled on the first assault...."

Riding on the crest of treason and bad faith, the British armies entered Lahore. The Khalsa Army was broken up. Gulab Singh was given the valley of Kashmir. Rani Jindan became the Mother Regent and Lal Singh as the first Minister.

In the above sordid drama, the bravery and courage of the Khalsa Army was exceptionally credit-worthy, and it has been appreciated by many writers. Cunningham has recorded:

"The soldiers showed neither the despondency of mutinous rebels nor the effrontery and indifference of mercenaries,

⁷ Cunningham 277.

and their manly deportment added lustre to that valour which the victors had dearly felt and generously extolled. The men talked of their defeat as the chance of war But amid all their humiliation, they inwardly dwelt upon their future destiny with unabated confidence . . .”⁸

Sometimes they would remark :

“with a significant and sardonic smile that the Khalsa itself was yet a child, and that as the Commonwealth of Sikhs grew in stature, Gobind would clothe his disciples with irresistible might and guide them with unequalled skill. . . .”⁹

William Edwards, Under Secretary to the British Government, who followed the Governor-General in the very thick of these battles, wrote :

“Sikhs were the bravest and the best disciplined enemy we had yet encountered, and never was an Empire in greater peril at any previous period than at this time.”¹⁰

General Gough called it the “splendid gallantry of our fallen foe.” Gordon said: “The Sikhs shook our Indian empire to its base.”

In short, when Lord Dalhousie arrived in India the Sikhs had already lost the country between the rivers Beas and Sutlej as well as the province of Kashmir and Hazara. Ten thousand British bayonets at Lahore and thrice that number within call reminded them of their defeat in the first Sikh War. But the thrall of subjection in which the defeat of Sobraon had bound the brave Sikhs was only a pause for the silent accumulation of violent elements. Very soon the storm began to blow. Although the “hearts to dare and hands to execute were numerous; but there was no mind to guide and animate the whole.”

In the second Anglo-Sikh War, the most well-contested and bloody battles were fought at Chillianwala and Gujrat.

⁸ Cunningham 289. ⁹ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁰ *Reminiscences of a Bengal Civilian*, 83.

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In the battle of Chillianwala, the English stormed the position of the Khalsa army but it was a victory worse than the defeat. Lord Dalhousie was shocked and according to his biographer, he wanted to remove General Gough from the command. "When the news of Chillianwala reached England, the nation was stricken with profound emotion." The Khalsa Army was, however, defeated in the battle of Gujrat, and the Khalsa soldiers surrendered their arms and swords with their eyes aswim with the tears of a fading glory and a spreading twilight. One of them remarked, "today Maharaja Ranjit Singh is really dead."

ROLE OF THE PATRIOTS—1846-50

Although the element of treachery was so profound in the First and the Second Sikh Wars, the story of heroism was no less glorious. The names of Sham Singh Atariwala and Bhai Maharaj Singh will always shine in the annals of Sikh history.

At a time when the English had increased their forces in the Panjab to 44,000 men and 100 cannon; when Lawrence was demanding the disbandment of the Khalsa army at Lahore; when the treacheries of Tej Singh and Raja Lal Singh had turned victories into dark defeats, when Gulab Singh was negotiating with Hardinge to surrender the Lahore kingdom to the English, Sham Singh came forward to die for the freedom and dignity of his people. Cunningham has described this in the following words:

"The danger which threatened the Sikh people pressed upon their mind and they saw no escape from foreign subjugation. The grey-haired chief Sham Singh of Atariwala made known his resolution to die in the first conflict with the enemies of his race, and so to offer himself up as a sacrifice of propitiation to the spirit of Gobind and to the genius of his mystic Commonwealth."¹¹

His heroism has also been noted by Griffin in his book *Conditions and Families of Note*. According to him, trait-

¹¹ Cunningham, 281.

tors like Lal Singh and Tej Singh who were conducting the war in the most shameless manner tried to dissuade Sham Singh Atariwala, but he remained firm. The Holy Granth was brought and Sham Singh took the pledge: "Should the Sikhs be defeated he would never leave the trenches alive." This happened on the night of 9th February 1846. He fulfilled his resolve.

From the end of the First Sikh War to the year 1850, the patriotic element among the Sikh leadership tried their best to raise the flag of rebellion and independence against the British rule in the Panjab. Bhai Maharaj Singh was one of these leaders. He secretly established contacts with Maharani Jindan and a conspiracy was hatched to murder Henry Lawrence and Raja Tej Singh in the Shalimar Gardens on 21st April 1847. The plan leaked out and all the conspirators with the exception of Bhai Maharaj Singh were arrested. Bhai Maharaj Singh went underground. His property was confiscated and a reward of Rs. 1,000 was announced for his arrest. He remained undetected for two years. He met Mool Raj at Multan with a number of volunteers. He contacted Chhattar Singh of Hazara, so that the anti-British Sikhs and the Pathan chiefs may make a common cause against the English. His part in the battles of Ram Nagar, Chillianwala and Gujrat was important. Even after the defeat of Gujrat, he called all the Sardars at Rawalpindi to organise resistance against the British rule.

He also chalked out a scheme to secure the person of Maharaja Dalip Singh from the hands of the English. But this scheme failed. Some of his men were arrested. He collected a large number of soldiers to attack the cantonments of Hoshiarpur and Jullundur. Third January 1850 was fixed as the date for such an attack. But he was arrested by Vanisttart, D. C. of Jullundur, on 28th December 1849. He died in the British prison as an exile in Singapore on 5th July, 1856.

Another such patriot was Baba Bikram Singh, who was some time the acting Priest to the Maharaja. He issued a call to the Khalsa in the following words:

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“Since life is short, it is not becoming of you to forget what is due from you (towards your country).”¹²

After the First Sikh War he refused to surrender his guns and forts to the English, and he became one of the important rebels against the Imperialists.¹³

It is clear from all available sources that many important parts of the Panjab, including Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi were honeycombed with secret conspiracies amongst the people and some of the leaders of that province to raise the flag of rebellion against the British authority. Rani Jindan was the Queen Bee of this revolt. She was the mother of Dalip Singh and was considered to be a woman of determined courage. Dalhousie described her as “the only person having manly understanding in the Panjab.” No doubt, before the First Sikh War, her part in the politics of the province had been sordid and selfish. She had been an active member of that pro-British party which had entrenched itself at the Lahore Court after the death of Ranjit Singh. She had worked the Khalsa army into a frenzy under the influence of Raja Gulab Singh, Tej Singh and Lal Singh.

She was, however, a changed person after the First Sikh War. She was then determined to throw out the English from the kingdom of her deceased husband. The Rani contacted Mool Raj of Multan through a maidservant for the cause of the Khalsa against the British. The British removed her from Lahore to the fort of Sheikhpura where she was kept from August 1847 to the middle of May 1848 in suffocating conditions. She was cut off from all contacts and her allowance was reduced from Rs. 12,000 to 4,000 as a punishment. Even in such circumstances, she hatched an anti-British plot from her prison. Lahore was to be suddenly attacked. Her secret agents worked for a simultaneous rising at Mukerian, Jammu, Peshawar and Ferozepore. The plot leaked out. Bhai Ganga Ram, Tulsi Ram and Kahan Singh and many others were arrested on 8th

¹² Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Panjab's Pioneer Freedom Fighters*, 70.

¹³ *Secret Consultation*, December 26, 1846, 983-84.

May 1848.¹⁴ This caused a sensation in the acity of Lahore. On 11th May 1848, Ganga Ram and the ex-General Kahan Singh were hanged. Eight or nine people escaped and joined Mool Raj.

The Maharani had hatched the above conspiracy with the help of Shiv Dayal who acted as the channel of correspondence between the Maharani and other chiefs. She was also helped by a number of Hindustani conspirators such as Umrao Singh. Besides the above named persons, Tulsi Ram, Naranjan, Maharaj, a saraf of Lahore and a Bairagi Sadhu named Gobind Das were involved. According to the secret records of the Government of India the Maharani even approached the adjoining States including the Maharaja of Bikaner.¹⁵

The English felt alarmed and they banished her to Banaras. A reign of terror was let loose at Lahore and widespread searches were made. At Banaras, the Rani engaged an English lawyer of Calcutta through whom she sent a strongly-worded petition, enquiring of the Governor-General the reasons for her close confinement at Sheikhpura, and her banishment to Banaras. Even from Banaras she continued to direct and inspire the revolt of Mool Raj, the Sikh forces at Bannu, Hazara and Peshawar, Dost Muhammad of Kabul and the *cis-Sutlej* chiefs who were pressed by her to join the freedom struggle. She continued to send messages to the rebel leaders and Raja Sher Singh. In one of her letters she wrote to him:

"A hundred praises on your gallantry. As long as the heavens and the earth last, people will talk of your fame . . . My thoughts night and day are fixed on the Panjab."¹⁶

On 4th April 1849, the English came to know of her communications, and she was sent to the Chunar fort with two companies of Infantry and a Risala of Cavalry. After a fortnight i.e. on 18th April, 1849, the news flashed out

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29th July, 1848, No. 38.

¹⁵ *Secret Consultation*, 7th October, 1848, No. 165.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26th May, 1849, No. 114.

that the Maharani was missing although all her 18 lady attendants were there. In fact, the Rani had escaped a little earlier, perhaps, on the evening of the sixth. She left a letter in which she threatened the British in the following words:

“I had told you plainly not to punish me too hard. Now see whether the Punjab shall not be finally settled.”¹⁷

It was the good luck of the English that the Maharani had not escaped earlier as Dalhousie put it; because then the Sikhs of the Panjab would have made another great bid for freedom. All the jewels and property of the Maharani at Banaras were confiscated.

The Maharani reached Kathmandu (Nepal) on Sunday, 29th April, 1849. Only then she learnt that the rebellion in the Panjab had failed, and Punjab had been annexed. She tried to see the British Resident who refused to receive her.¹⁸

The Governor-General did not request the authorities in Nepal to surrender the Rani to the English because he was “certain that the demand would be refused and the refusal would either lead to force or at least to unfriendly feelings between the States.”¹⁹ But the pressure of the Imperialists on Nepal made the activities of the Rani quite difficult. She addressed letters to the Panjab State prisoners at Allahabad. In one letter she wrote to Boota Singh and Lal Sing: “Let your mind be at ease. We are not sitting idle.”²⁰ But again her plot was discovered, and the enquiry revealed that Sita Ram and Parsu Ram of Kanpur as well as Sobha Singh, the secret agent of the Maharani, were involved through the agency of two Hindus named Ram Parshad and Ram Deen at Allahabad. The centre of activity at Allahabad was the house of one Parvati Jogin. These persons had prepared the rolls of Hindu and Sikh Sepoys of British regiments posted at

¹⁷ *Secret Consultation*, 26th May, 1849, No. 33, 125 & 136.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 134.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25th October, 1850, No. 41-42.

Allahabad so that their support may be enlisted in creating disturbances.²¹ The Maharani wrote to ex-General Kahan Singh to prepare the Manjha people for an uprising. She asked some chieftains to enlist the support of Pathan and Afghan chiefs.²² At this stage, the British again pressed the Nepal authorities to put a stop to her activities. She was accordingly warned.

Her efforts did not stop till she was allowed to return to Calcutta where she met her son Dalip Singh in April 1861. They proceeded to England where the Maharani died in 1863 "prematurely old, well-nigh blind, broken and subdued in spirit."

Discontent amongst the People

All the above facts show that the events following the First Anglo-Sikh War made the people of Panjab, and some of the patriotic Sikh leaders extremely discontented and powerful rebellions were raised against the encroachments of the British. Bhai Maharaj Singh, Mool Raj, Sham Singh, Chhattar Singh, Bikram Singh and Rani Jindan were the king-pins of such rebellions. According to the British records even the people were deeply discontent. On 2nd June, 1847, Henry Lawrence expressed fears of a widespread discontent in the Punjab.²³ On 4th October 1848, Frederick Currie, the new Resident, wrote to Lord Dalhousie:

"There has been from the period of our occupation, a very general spirit of disaffection prevailing in the length and breadth of land and affecting particularly the armies and the disbanded soldiery, but shared in by all the Hindu and some Muslim population."²⁴

Even the population in Lahore took keen interest in the events of the War. It kept a secret liaison with the rebels. Lahore was also a recruiting centre of rebels from Multan and Atariwala. Currie reported:

²¹ *Secret Consultation*, 9th September 1850, No. 7.

²² *Secret Consultation*, 27th September, 1850, Nos. 10 & 11.

²³ *Ibid.*, 26th June, 1849, No. 136.

²⁴ *Secret Consultation*, 25th November 1848, No. 159.

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"All the Darbar officials in the districts, and the people are in favour of the rebel cause... most of them actively."²⁵

The rebels also issued a proclamation from Multan in the following words:

"The Maharaja Dalip Singh will, by the Guru's Grace be firmly established in his kingdom; and the cow and Brahmin will be protected and our religion will prosper... the Maharaja and his Mother are in great sorrow and affliction. It is our duty to-day to engage ourselves for their cause, you will obtain their favour and support. Khalsaji! Gird up your loins under the protection of the Guru and Guru Gobind Singh will preserve thy honour."²⁶

All the above rebellions failed because all the attempts of the rebels to obtain the person of Maharaja Dalip Singh or even Rani Jindan did not succeed. Secondly, the Sikh leaders in Lahore Darbar such as Tej Singh, Dina Nath and others did not make a common cause. Thirdly, the power and strength of the English was properly organised.

The Perfidy and Double-Dealing of the English

Lord Hardinge relinquished his office in January, 1848 and was succeeded by Lord Dalhousie who reached Calcutta on 18th January, 1848. The departing Governor-General had assured Dalhousie that it should not be necessary to fire a gun in India for seven years to come.²⁷ But, perhaps, Hardinge did not realise the aims of his successor who was young as well as ambitious in his 36th year. Under Lord Dalhousie, the whole policy of the East India Company was to encourage and provoke a widespread rebellion in the Panjab so that it may provide them with an excuse for the use of their vast military machine towards the annexation of the Panjab. It was for this purpose that they engineered the rebellion of Mool Raj in

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 25th November 1848, No. 138, and 157.

²⁶ Ahluwalia and Singh, *The Panjab's Freedom Fighters*, 1.

²⁷ Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence*, Vol. I, 245-46.

Multan, the standing provocation of Rani Jindan's banishment, and the rebellion of Chhattar Singh at Hazara. The outbreak at Multan which was sudden and unpremeditated was in fact the work of the Multan soldiery against the anticipated English domination in that part. They did not like the dispossession of Mool Raj, their respected and beloved leader. They were infuriated at the prospect of foreigners coming to wrest from the Dewan the Government of the province of Multan, because they felt that the new choice of the English would always hold the candle for the British. They also feared that many of them would be dismissed as soon the British influence increased. It was in such circumstances that the two British officers were murdered and Mool Raj was compelled by the soldiers to lead them.

It was a well-considered desire of the English that the rebellion should be allowed to assume greater proportions so that they may be enabled to annex it; hence the British authorities delayed the suppression of the Multan outbreak on the pretext of hot weather. One writer has put it thus: "The Government of India had decided to let the Panjab abscess come to a head, when ripe to lance it freely in the coming cold weather."²⁸ Herbert Edwards was more outspoken when he said:

"Some of the hardest campaigns were fought in the hot weather Now if we wished to appropriate the country, and upset that throne, we have only to concentrate a Sikh army on Multan; and disloyalty would follow union, national insurrection would follow disloyalty, and the seizure of the Punjab in self-defence follow insurrection, as inevitably as the links of a chain. The world would acquit us, being ignorant of what we know; but neither God nor our conscience could do so."²⁹

Lord Dalhousie was equally conscious of what was going

²⁸ Thorburn, *Punjab in Peace and War*, 101.

²⁹ Edwards to Currie May 4, 1848; L. 44/Bk. 191, P. G. R.—quoted by Jagmohan Mahajan, 90.

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to happen — the revolt of Multan assuming wider proportions and giving a chance to the English to annex the whole State. On August 4, 1848, he wrote:

“If not in my day, assuredly in my successors, the curtain will fall on the Sikh dynasty The road to annex the Punjab is beyond cavil.”³⁰

On 18th September he was more candid: “I can see no escape from the necessity of annexing this infernal country.” On 15th October 1848, he was still more forthright:

“The task before me is the utter destruction and prostration of the Sikh power, the subversion of its dynasty, and the subjection of its people. This must be done, promptly, fully and finally.”³¹

All the above facts show the real intentions of the English. The British gave further provocation through the forced banishment of Rani Jindan. This caused resentment throughout Panjab, as well as the rebellion of Sher Singh. According to Currie, the Sikh soldiers openly said:

“She was the mother of all the Khalsa, and that as she was gone and the young Dalip Singh in our hands, they had no longer any one to fight for and uphold, and they had no inducement to oppose Mul Raj.”³²

The discontentment was so widespread that even Dost Muhammad, the Amir of Afghanistan, wrote to Capt. Abbott:

“The Sikhs are daily becoming more and more discontented. Some have been dismissed from service, while others have been banished to Hindustan, particularly the mother of Maharaja Dalip Singh, who has been imprisoned and ill-treated. Such treatment is considered

³⁰ Baird (ed), *Private Letters of the Marquess of Dalhousie*, 25-27.

³¹ Quoted in Morison, 216.

³² *Secret Consultation*, 7th October 1848, No. 190.

objectionable by all creeds, and both high and low preferred death."³³

The same story of provocation was repeated by Abbott against Sardar Chhattar Singh who was compelled to join the rebel cause. His son Sher Singh, therefore, joined Mool Raj and issued the manifesto calling upon all good Sikhs to "expel the tyrannical and crafty *Feringhis* under whom both their possessions and their religion were threatened." The response to this was both wide and instantaneous, and the old soldiers of the Khalsa army flocked at many places to join Sher Singh.

It was in such ways that the British caused the widespread rebellion to fulfil their ambition of annexing the land of the Gurus. Lord Dalhousie was extremely happy and he expressed his feelings to Currie:

"The rebellion of Raja Sher Sing... the rebellion of Sardar Chhattar Singh... the state of troops, and of the Sikh population everywhere have brought matters to that crisis, I have for months been looking for"³⁴

Trotter has referred to the designs of the English in the following words:

"If the delay in crushing the rebellion sprang in part from a secret hope of its spreading far enough, to furnish Government with a fair excuse for annexing the whole dominions of Ranjit Singh, that excuse grew more and more feasible as week after week of the hot and rainy seasons slipped by."³⁵

The British perfidy and double-dealing may also be judged from their proclamations issued at the time of their military operations. Inwardly, Lord Dalhousie had already

³³ Quoted by Jagmohan Mahajan, *Circumstances leading to the annexation of the Punjab*, 102-103.

³⁴ Quoted by Jagmohan Mahajan, *Circumstances leading to the annexation of the Punjab*, 113.

³⁵ *History of the British People in India*, Vol. 134.I,

decided to regard the English at war with the Sikhs irrespective of the fact that Dalip Singh was under the control of the English at Lahore. The British Resident Currie wrote to the Governor-General that this could not be the legal position. He also knew that if the British declared their real intentions of annexing Panjab, the difficulties of the situation would be greater to surmount. This is why he suggested to the Governor-General:

“I think that in the first instance nothing more explicit to the Government intentions need be proclaimed, and this proclamation should not be made till we are in circumstances to follow it up.... I think we may quietly annex the Panjab districts to the British provinces, making a suitable provision for the State and comfort of the Maharaja Dalip Singh.”³⁶

The climax of this double-dealing was reached when Currie issued to the people of the Panjab the following proclamation on November 18, 1848:

“It is not the desire of the British Government that those who were innocent of the above offences (exciting rebellion and insurrection) who have taken no part, secretly or openly, in the disturbances, and who have remained faithful in their obedience to the Government of Maharaja Dalip Singh — be they Sikhs or be they of any other class—should suffer with the guilty....”³⁷

He further averred that the British army “has entered the Lahore territories, not as an enemy to the constituted Government, but to restore order and obedience.” This proclamation was approved by the Governor-General on 14th December, 1849.

In spite of the above proclamations, as soon as Lord Dalhousie heard of the surrender of Sher Singh and his troops, he sent his Foreign Secretary Henry Elliot to Lahore to tell the Council of Regency about the real intention

³⁶ *Vide* Jagmohan Mahajan, 116.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

of the British Government. Elliot arrived in Lahore on 28th of March, sent for Raja Tej Singh and Dewan Dina Nath to both of whom he proclaimed the idea of annexation. Both of them were stunned. Then the Members of the Council of Regency were made to put their signatures to the proposal of annexation under threat of the sequestration of their properties.

On 29th March 1849, a grand Darbar was held at the Palace in the Citadel. The British Resident, the leading Sardars, and young Maharaja Dalip Singh, who sat upon the throne of his father for the last time, were present. Elliot read out the fateful proclamation whereby the kingdom of the Punjab was ended and made part of the British empire in India. Dewan Dina Nath made his last effort, and stood up to say:

"If France after the defeat and imprisonment of Bonaparte had been restored to its legitimate ruler, though the country yielded thirty crores of revenue, it would be no very extraordinary act of British clemency, if the Punjab, which yielded less than three crores, should be restored to the Maharaja."³⁸

On 7th April, 1849, Lord Dalhousie sent a despatch to Secret Committee giving his reasons for the annexation of the Panjab. His report and reasons were perhaps the last word in misstatements and baseless accusations.

The illegality of the British act may be judged from the fact that "from the day the treaty of Bhairawal was signed to the day when the Panjab was annexed to the British empire, the British Resident was the virtual ruler of the Panjab and his control was never suspended or relaxed even for a day."³⁹ Yet they annexed Panjab. Ludlow has described this paradox in the following words:

"Dalip Singh was infant, his minority was only to end in 1854. We were his declared protectors. On our last advance into his country, we had proclaimed

³⁸ *Vide, Ibid.*, 125. ³⁹ *Vide, Ibid.*, 127.

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(18th November, 1848) that we came to punish the insurgents and to put down all armed opposition to constituted authority. We fulfilled that pledge by annexing his whole country within six months. On the 29th March 1849 the kingdom of the Punjab was declared to be at an end, the child, our protégé, was pensioned off; all State property confiscated to the Company, the celebrated diamond, the Koh-i-Noor surrendered to the Queen. In other words, we protected our ward by taking his whole territory from him."⁴⁰

When the British perfidy and duplicity was being perpetrated against the people of the Panjab, and their liberty and the State of deceased Maharaja Ranjit Singh was being made extinct, there was a lone figure who possessed a sensitive heart and a political foresight to understand the diplomacy involved in this drama. It was Guru Ram Singh before whose eyes the sordid drama had been played in all its ugly facets.



⁴⁰ Ludlow, *British India*, Vol. I, 16.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY CAREER OF GURU RAM SINGH

In the Pure Atmosphere of the Village, as well as in the Lap of Motherly Love and Loftiness, His Character was Moulded in a Cast of which Purity of Sentiment, Sublimity of Action, and Fearlessness of Conduct, were the essential Attributes.

SIXTEEN MILES from Ludhiana was located the small village of Bhainee which embodied a rural life typical in the land of the five rivers. From its surface rose a number of thatched huts plastered with mud. Around its fields, there existed a corporate life led by illiterate, simple, God-fearing and innocent people, to whom cattle-rearing was in the nature of things, and cultivating the fields was a part of their growth.

It was a village of peasant-proprietors where land belonged to the tillers of the soil, who cultivated it in small groups. Life was not hectic and people had many pastimes such as wrestling, manly exercises and local village games. It was a common sight to see the village boys taking out their cows to graze in the common land, singing loudly folk songs and settling their small childish disputes.

In such a village was born the great Guru of the Namdharis in the year 1816. This was the day when the fields were green with the crops and the yellow flowers were dancing majestically from the stems of the plants. This was spring-time, when everybody was happy and gay to celebrate the beauty of the season. It was the 'Basant-Panchami' when the house of a carpenter Jassa Singh and his wife Sada Kaur was blessed with the birth of a child.

Like many other great souls and saints, Guru Ram Singh had not received any education in the literal sense of the word. But he had a pious mother who reared him up by singing to him the verses from the Holy Granth, and by narrating to him the lives and the adventures of

the Gurus and other Epic heroes, just as had been done by the great mother of Shivaji.

Jassa Singh the carpenter, the father of Guru Ram Singh, held a key position in the village. His workshop was visited by the rich and the poor, by the noble and the restless, by the children and the grown-ups. He combined many functions in his single personality. He repaired agricultural tools; made kitchen appliances; advised in house-building and also helped in erecting the marriage *mandap*. In fact he was a *sapper* and miner for the whole village. He met a large number of people and was bound to be a keen observer of men. His workshop was also a meeting place for the village elders, and he was greatly respected.

Guru Ram Singh grew up in such a house. He learnt Gurmukhi from his mother and he memorised many parts of the 'Bani.' He was the eldest amongst the children of Jassa Singh and was, therefore, respected by his youngers. His sister was married and his brother Budh Singh was younger to him by four years. The family passed its days with love and amity among its members.

At the age of 9, Guru Ram Singh began to help his father in many works. He would go out with other boys to graze cattle. While the other boys sang the village folk songs, and competed in reciting the romantic verses from Hir-Ranjha and Mirza Sahiban, this promising child always sang verses from the Granth. The others felt amused, then felt interested, and finally joined the religious-minded Guru Ram Singh in reciting the Holy Verses. In this way Guru Ram Singh grew up among the shepherd boys with their love and simplicity. He learnt much in such an atmosphere and made selfless friends who did not part company with him even during the critical days.

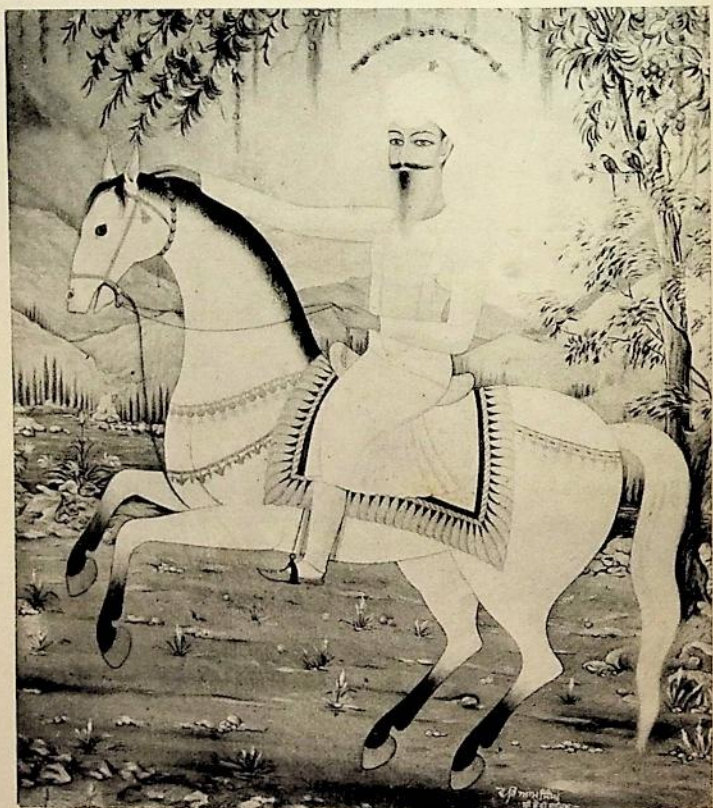
In the pure atmosphere of the village, as well as in the lap of motherly love and loftiness, his character was moulded in a cast of which purity of sentiment, sublimity of action, and fearlessness of conduct were the essential attributes.

In 1836, when he had grown up into a youth of twenty, his brother-in-law Kabul Singh who was himself in the artillery department of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army, took him to Lahore. Thus Ram Singh joined the Khalsa army only three years before the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

These were the days of his political education. He saw before his eyes, how the English were advancing towards the Lahore State and encircling it from all sides; sowing seeds of dissensions, promoting treason amongst the ranks of the Khalsa; and trying to fulfil their long-cherished ambition. He also viewed the greatness of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the heroism of Generals like Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phoola Singh, Dhanna Singh and Amar Singh. Before his eyes passed the thrilling events of the 1st Afghan War when "retreat became a rout and rout became a massacre."

Guru Ram Singh was also not oblivious of the prevailing moral degeneration amongst the Khalsas. Drinking, plural wives, keeping mistresses, leading a hot life of luxury on the pattern of the Muslim Nawabs, had become the real character of the enriched Sardars. Moral corruption had set in from all directions. Baits were also being thrown to the army by various leaders in the whirlpool of pernicious politics. Sikh religion had been gripped by monopolists of different sects whose teachings did not agree with the teachings of Nanak. Social evils of *Sati*, child marriage and infanticide had entered the stronghold of the Khalsa society. The innocent village people had forgotten the message of their great Gurus and were visiting Pirs and graves for alleviation of their troubles.

Guru Ram Singh at that time was in the Khalsa army. He saw the internal weakness of his community as well as the external danger from the imperialists. Service in the army failed to extinguish the religious flame in his heart; he remained regular in his prayers, forthright in his dealings and elevated in his character. All others in his regiment were impressed and they began to prefix his name with the word 'Bhai.' In fact his regiment came to be called as the Saint's Regiment. It was while serving in this



Satguru Ram Singh—the founder of the Kuka movement.

regiment that he came under the influence of Guru Balak Singh of Huzro in Campbellpur district (Sambat 1869—Baisakh Sudhi). It is claimed by the Namdharis that “the Guruship was conferred by the Tenth Guru on Guru Balak Singh of Huzro who passed it on to Guru Ram Singhji.” It is important to note that Huzro, the headquarters of of Guru Balak Singh, was also carefully watched by the Government. The Lt.-Governor of the Panjab specially deputed Mr. Greene, A.S.P. of Attock to keep an eye on Huzro.¹

These were the days when dramatic events followed in quick succession, when rot and decay was the order of the day, when betrayals were common and traitors were numerous. Ranjit Singh had died and his sons and his Ministers plunged the Lahore State into a pool of blood. Murders followed murders. The English were bound to take advantage of such a situation; the first Anglo-Sikh War became inevitable. Guru Ram Singh watched the drift of these historic events, and he predicted that the Khalsa army would never be victorious. In fact, he could sense treachery and treason stalking its ranks. In such circumstances he left the army on the eve of the battle of Mudki (1845). His apprehensions were correct and the Sikh cause was lost. Lahore was occupied by the English.

Guru Ram Singh passed some time in cultivating the fields and in saying his prayers. His hand was on the plough and his heart was with the Almighty. He became famous for his godliness. This was the time when Khalsa army was being broken up and when the Sikh soldiers were being replaced by the Gurkhas, Poorbias and Muslim Sepoys everywhere, when the interior forts were being razed to the ground and when the *cis-Sutlej* chieftains were being rewarded with titles and privileges by the English. A new Penal Code was introduced in the Panjab, and English courts were established. English cloth began to reach the markets of the Panjab. The extension of rail lines, telegraph and postal system was taken in hand. In such circumstances

¹ Kuka papers, quoted by Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 67.

when the people were being offered the opium doses of a new civilization and the bribe of a new economic life, Guru Ram Singh started preaching. His one-time soldier colleagues of the Khalsa army gathered around him and thus a nucleus was formed. His fame spread rapidly. Guru Ram Singh went from place to place with his new message because he had resolved to extricate the people of the Panjab from the ditches of degradation. He had seen the Khalsa being washed away by the triple currents of social evils, treason, and the enveloping influences of the imperial power. He was determined to bring about a religious revival, and to re-establish social purity among his people so that the ground of slavery may be scratched, and the final bid for freedom may be made. He started his mission with vigour, sincerity and earnestness. It was none the less the beginning of a new chapter in his own life.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORMS TO WIN FREEDOM

Such was the Guru who Reformed the Sikh Society in the Second Half of the 19th Century, Giving Them a Moral Height which They had Altogether Lost; Bestowing upon Them a New Life of Purity, Simplicity, Fearlessness and Love, which They Needed Badly; Cured Them of All Their Corroding Maladies, and Prepared Them for a New Crusade against the Crushing Evil of Foreign Rule.

IN THE YEAR 1879, Guru Ram Singh wrote from his exile and prison in Burma:

"I maintain friendship only with those who devote themselves, whoever they may be, to worship and prayer."¹

In the above words can be traced the philosophy and the origin of the new movement initiated by Guru Ram Singh. After Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhism had passed through many storms and difficulties. All this gave it a maturity as well as a sense of struggle and permanency: It nevertheless affected its quality. Many changes had been introduced in Sikhism along with changing circumstances and political upheavals. According to Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahney, "The religious and national life of the Sikhs had been completely ruined." The Sikhs had lost their character and had abandoned their original unity and purity. Their food and their dress had undergone a change due to the influence of Westernism. They did not possess those qualities which were associated with the word 'Khalsa'. Their forthrightness, that striving for truth, goodwill towards others, and the reading of the holy verses, had completely waned, if the views of Sant Nidhan Singh Alam are to be considered true. The same writer records:

¹ Translation of Paper No. 8, *vide Home-Judicial Proceedings* 257-59 of August 1879.

“Those Sikhs whose ancestors used to get up early in the morning, washed themselves properly and read the Guru Granth before even taking a grain of food—were now so fallen that their life seemed to be entirely changed. Now they did not read Japji and their whole attitude was one of contempt and ridicule towards religion.”²

The Hindus were equally devoid of religious practices. They were suffering from the same social evils which existed in their society at the time of the rise of the Bhakti movement. Both the Hindus and the Sikhs practised rituals and sold their daughters. In such circumstances, it was absolutely essential that the work of religious revival should be undertaken so that the scattered limbs of a powerful society may be united into a compact nation for the cause of liberty.

Guru Ram Singh was a clear-headed leader who launched a crusade for religious reform and revival. He discerned that political independence had disappeared from the Panjab and the rest of the country because true religion had become extinct in the hearts of the people. He had witnessed with his own eyes how moral and religious decline went hand in hand with political shame, defeat and enslavement in the land of the five rivers. He had seen how the so-called leaders had sold the liberty of Panjab and the honour of the people into the hands of the foreigners for the sake of their selfish and shortsighted ends. This is why he reached the crucial decision that he should reform the Sikh and Hindu society as an important pre-condition to freedom. The result of his decision can be seen in the Namdhari movement which was launched by him in the fluid atmosphere of the Panjab. For this purpose, he had already established a new centre at Bhainee as the radiating point of his views. He wanted to be away from religious monopolists of Amritsar and other places, so that he could attract away his true disciples towards entirely different directions.

According to the Government records:

² Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, *Krantic Kari SatGuru*, 22.

Social and Religious Reforms to Win Freedom

"All castes of Hindus and even Muslims, may become Kookas but the converts were chiefly made from Jats, Tarkhans, Chamars and Mazhibis"³

According to the same source, each newly enrolled disciple had to proceed to Bhainee where he received the necklace of knotted wool which marked his creed. Reported Mr. Kinchent that according to Kukas:

"Gobind Singh's Granth is the only true one written by inspiration, and is the only sacred writing. Gobind Singh is the real Guru. Any person irrespective of caste or religion can be admitted a convert. Sodees, Bedees, Mahunts, Brahmins and such likes are impostors as none are Gurus except Gobind Singh. Dewee Dwars, Shiv Dwars and Mandirs are means of extortion to be held in contempt and never visited. Idol, and idol worship are insulting to God and will not be forgiven. Converts are allowed to read Gobind Singh's Granth and no other book. At meetings, both sexes, covered their heads and singing portions of the Granth, worked themselves up to a state of frenzy."⁴

In the correspondence printed in 1863, following is given as the summary of Kuka beliefs:

"He abolishes all distinctions of caste among Sikhs; advocates indiscriminate marriages of all classes; enjoins the marriage of widows, all which he performs himself; he never takes alms himself and prohibits his followers from doing so; enjoins abstinence from liquors and drugs... he exhorts his disciples to be cleanly and truth-telling and it is well that every man carries his staff; and they all do; the Granth is their only accepted inspired volume. The brotherhood may be known by the tie of their turban — Sheeda Pug, by a watch-word, by

³ Dept. of Home, Progs. 273-284 of August 1872.

⁴ *Ibid.* (In the eyes of the Namdharis equal importance is given to the Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth.)

a necklace of knots made in a white woollen cord, to repeat beads and which are worn by all the community.”⁵

According to the Government records each Kuka was given an initiation verse which was translated by Mr. Kinchent, to be:

“First consent to death; give the desire to live; become the dust of the earth; and then come to me”⁶

According to Major Perkins (1866), after initiation the disciple was supposed to have forsworn all vices such as lying, stealing, drinking, adultery, etc. There was also the provision of a Panchayat where the offenders could be punished or brought back to the path of religious purity. The converts were ordered to bathe the entire body and wash the hair of their heads every morning at 3 o'clock. After bathing they were to pray, read aloud and repeat the sacred verses from the Granth.⁷

The practice of Chandi-Path⁸ was also introduced because it promised physical strength for the sake of the defence of the religion. The assembly for Chandi-Path generally lasted for two or three days. A Government official described the ceremony in the following words:

“First, two or three maunds of wood are collected and set fire to, then ghee, halwa, fruits, etc. are thrown into it to make the wood burn more slowly; the assembled Kookas stood around whilst one reads the Granth and others repeat Ashlokas. After this has been going on for a time, some of them became so excited that they

⁵ *Ibid.* (Marriages were not permitted between some castes such as of Chamars and Mazhbis with Aroras and Khatris, nor were they allowed to eat together in the same utensils. Otherwise they were treated an equal basis.)

⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ According to the Kukas, Chandi-Path practice was started by Guru Gobind Singh to prepare the Sikhs for struggle against oppressors; to instil warlike temper. It signified: ‘Devatas must fight against demons.’

endeavoured to throw themselves into the fire. However, certain men are invariably told off beforehand to prevent the more excitable brethren doing any harm to themselves.”⁹ Apart from the above account found in the records, the true and the real performance of the Chundi Path may be given in the following words:

“Seven persons used to purify themselves by bathing thoroughly in order to perform this ceremony. The incense was burnt; the Havan Samagri consisting of 22 ingredients and Ghee was prepared. The holy fire was lit with special wood. Five persons used to recite holy verses or ‘Bani’ and the other two used to make offering to the fire, of Samagri and water alternately.”

In June 1863, Guru Ram Singh issued a special circular in which he prohibited the sale of daughters as well as infanticide. The circular, according to the official records, said:

“Whoever makes money by the marriage of his daughter is a rascal. Whoever commits infanticide is equally so.”¹⁰

He issued another circular before Diwali in which he said:

“Be meek, hear ill or harsh things from all; if any strike you even then be meek; your protector is God. Always hide your good deeds. Look upon the daughters and sisters of the others as your own.”¹¹

ANAND MARRIAGE

Guru Ram Singh was conscious of the prevailing poverty in the land. He also knew how the Brahmanic influence had increased immensely since the days of Ranjit Singh. He decided to save his meek and simple disciples from costly marriage ceremonies, and other expensive rituals. This was to save them from avoidable indebtedness, as well as from the over-powering sway of the Pundits. Accordingly, he initiated the Anand Marriage ceremony

⁹ Dept. of Home, Progs. 273-284 of August 1872.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* ¹¹ *Ibid.*

which could be performed at a nominal cost. It was readily acceptable to the poor villagers who formed the bulk of his followers.

The Namdhari sources claim that the Anand Marriages were not initiated by anybody except their Guru Ram Singh. The marriages of almost all the Gurus including the one of the Tenth Guru, they say, were performed according to Brahmanic rites. They admit, the marriage of even Guru Ram Singh himself, was performed by the family priest in the traditional way.

Guru Ram Singh launched his programme of Anand Marriages in the first week of June 1863 in the village of Khote where a large number of Namdhari disciples collected under the inspiration of the Guru. The daughter and granddaughter of Summund Singh was married in the simple form. The daughter of a carpenter was married in the family of the Arora caste so that the caste feeling may be eschewed. People felt greatly interested to see the performance of such marriages by the Guru. But the Brahmans who had been acting as the priests of village families for a long time raised a powerful cry of protest. They threatened to throw themselves into the burning pyre if the new system of marriages was not stopped. The Brahmanas were supported by such menials as barbers, washermen and street-singers, since their earnings were equally affected. But the Namdhari leader refused to yield. Consequently, a report was made to the authorities about the collection and activities of 500 Namdharis in their village. The Governor ordered the Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepore to proceed to the village of Khote for proper investigations. As a result the Namdharis were compelled to break their assembly, and they were sent back to their respective villages. Guru Ram Singh was interned in Bhainee Sahib.

In spite of the above interference of the Government, the practice of Anand Marriage prevailed among the Namdharis without exception. It was also revived amongst other Sikhs. Side by side, the agitation for this reform went on and, in 1909, the Anand Marriage Act was passed by



The present Namdhari Guru (first from left) at the Anand Marriage Centenary, Khote—1963.



Anand Marriage Centenary, Khoté, Distt. Ferozepur, 3 June 1963—Marriages being performed.

the Government of India due to the efforts of the then Namdhari Satguru Pratap Singh, Tikka Sahib of Nabha, and some others. This Act was passed on 2nd October, 1909.

It can be seen from the above account, based mainly on the Government files, that Guru Ram Singh introduced a simple, social and religious change in the sordid atmosphere of the Panjab, which had been vitiated by the actions of the Khalsa nobles of the Lahore Darbar. He saved the Sikhs from the growing influence of the English. He taught them the ideals of clean living, honest earning, equality of human beings, simple dress, celibacy and tolerance. He finished, from the ranks of his disciples, the practices of Sati, infanticide, child marriage, trading in girls, borrowing, lies, adultery, stealing and drinking. It is said that once a drunkard and opium eater named Darbara Singh (of Kila Raipur Dist. Ludhiana) approached the Guru for wine and opium. Guru Ram Singh said, he could intoxicate him with God's name. He was directed to come after bathing. When he returned, the Guru put his sacred verses in his ears. The man was totally transformed. He broke his wine and opium jars at home and became one of the most reliable disciples of Guru Ram Singh. Such transformations among the Sikhs were numerous.

The Guru entrenched religious duties, early rising and bathing, meditation, charity and Langar, as the most important principles of his disciples. He denounced the dowry system, and in most of the marriages performed among his disciples, the expenditure on each was usually not more than Rs. 1-4 as.

Lastly, it may be pointed out that the Guru himself practised what he preached. He kept up his religious practices in the purest form even as a prisoner of the English. He wrote to his brother from his exile:

"Give food, drink and clothing as much as you can to the poor and the hungry."¹²

¹² Translation of Paper 1, Home/Judicial B-Progs. 257-259 of August 1879.

He wrote again:

"Continue taking God's name with all your strength as all blessings are derived from it. I searched in vain for comfort everywhere and took to several occupations for this purpose but when I got under Guru's protection, I found every comfort...."¹³

In another letter he wrote:

"Brother Hari Singh do not have any ill-feeling against any one ... as the people do, so will they be rewarded ... Go on with your prayers and continue to feed the hungry."¹⁴

Guru Ram Singh loved his disciples and followers in his worst circumstances. In one of his letters from the prison he said:

"Who is better to me than my Sikhs? I pray day and night: Oh! Guru keep me while I live and let me die in the midst of my Sikhs who obey you I send herewith Rs. 151 in cash to be used in feeding the poor."¹⁵

Such was the Guru who reformed the Sikh society in the second half of the 19th century, giving them a moral basis which they had altogether lost; bestowing upon them a new life of purity, simplicity, fearlessness and love, which they needed badly; cured them of all their corroding maladies, and prepared them for a new crusade against the crushing evil of foreign rule.

¹³ Paper 2 *vide ibid.*

¹⁴ Paper 4 *vide ibid.*

¹⁵ Vide Home/Judicial-B-Progs. 232-236 of September 1st 80.

CHAPTER VI

GURU RAM SINGH UNFURLS THE WHITE FLAG OF FREEDOM—AND THE IMPERIALISTS REACT

It is My Thorough Belief that These Lads (Kukas)
Mean War Sooner or Later.

Col. R. G. Taylor

1866

GURU RAM SINGH, like Guru Gobind Singh, had purified the ranks of the Sikhs and had given them a new moral outlook as well as a new character. Thereby, he had produced fine material and a strong patriotic element for his cause. He understood that the battle of freedom, which was no less a part of his religion, could hardly be won without a social and moral purge. This is why he began by preaching truth and righteousness.

He had also seen how degraded persons could lead to the dissolution of a sovereign State. He had closely studied how sinful and dangerous was all contact with the foreign masters, as it had taught treason and treachery to fallen souls like Tej Singh and Lal Singh. This is why, side by side with moral and social teachings, he was anxious to draw his disciples away from the pernicious influence of the imperialists, so that treacheries may no more vitiate his ranks.

With such a deep and perfect understanding of the pitfalls and dangers before him, he unfurled his triangular white flag at his headquarters at Bhainee on 14th April, 1857. In this way he launched a new ship on a new voyage, tried to revive the message of Guru Gobind Singh, and to break the slumber of the innocent masses for a glorious crusade. On the one hand, he gave to his disciples the original teachings and mission of Guru Gobind, and on the other, he decided to introduce swadeshi and non-co-operation against the British. This was his two-pronged attack

for the resurrection of a fallen nation, so that the flag may once again fly in the four winds as a symbol of liberty and religion. All this happened nearly one month before the great rebellion of 1857. He declared his fine principles and glorious aim in a special gathering of toiling peasants, field labourers, illiterate carpenters and village artisans, who formed the real backbone of the Indian masses. They were not wealthy disciples; but in sincerity and faithfulness their richness was supreme.

When the rebellion of 1857 broke out, Panjab was deeply affected. A large number of soldiers raised the cry of freedom and a big mass of people felt equally discontented against the British rule. About the part of the Panjab in this rebellion, a wrong impression has been created by certain writers for whom it is difficult to draw a line between History and Journalism, or even between history and fiction. They have also been misled to refer to the existence of Sikh-Poorbiya feeling to describe the events of this upheaval in the Panjab. When the actual story is unfolded it would be seen that Panjab, along with other provinces, did exist on the map of India in our first struggle to break the chains of British Imperialism. However, all those elements which were supreme in helping the British from 1845-49 for destroying the independence of the sovereign state of the deceased Maharaja Ranjit Singh, once again combined to help the English in the crisis of 1857. Only that saved the imperial barge.

But the ranks of the Namdharis swelled as a result of this rebellion. Many mutinous Sikh sepoys became Kukas. One of Guru Ram Singh's most important Subas, namely Brahma Singh, was a mutinous sepoy of 1857.

For about 5 years, Guru Ram Singh went on preaching his great gospel amongst the villagers, and at religious centres. He gathered a large number of disciples. In the year 1863, he had more than 40,000 disciples, whose unity, oneness of purpose, love of the Guru and moral tone were so pronounced that the English felt shaken. They emplo-

yed their secret agents in order to find out the real character of this movement.

One such agent was Munee Ram Brahmin of Jullundur who reported to the Government :¹

“Ram Singh is gifted with magic power, which sends people into fits In common with all other Sikhs, doubtless, Ram Singh wishes their rule back but he does not preach this; considers himself unquestionably a Prophet and believes his preachings to be entirely of a religious nature.”²

Another secret agent named Gainda Singh was sent by the Cantonment Magistrate of Jullundur. He went to the village of Bhainee and claimed to have obtained two letters revealing Guru Ram Singh's political ambition. Letter No. 1:

“Guru Gobind Singh Sahai. I Guru Gobind Singh will be born in a carpenter shop, and may be called Ram Singh. My house will be between the Jamuna and the Sutlej rivers. I will declare my religion. I will defeat the *Feringhee*, and put the crown on my own head, and blow the ‘Sunkh’. Musicians shall praise me in 1921 (1864). I, the carpenter, will sit on the throne. When I have got 1,25,000 of Sikhs with me, I will cut off the heads of the *Feringhee*. I will never be conquered in battle, and will shout ‘Akai,’ ‘Akai’. The Christians will desert their wives and fly from the country when they hear the shout of 1,25,000 Kookas. A great battle will take place on the banks of the Jamuna, and blood will flow like the waters of Ravi and no *Feringhee* will be left alive. Insurrection will take place in the country in 1922 (1865). The Khalsa will reign and the Raja and Raiyyat will live in peace and comfort and no one shall molest another.

“Day by day Ram Singh's rule will be enlarged. God has written this. It is not lie my brethren. In 1865 the

¹ Home-Judicial Progs. 273-284 of August 1872.

² *Ibid.*

whole country will be ruled by Ram Singh. My followers will worship Bhagrao—God wishes this will happen.”³

The above report of Gainda Singh seems to be the work of a polluted mind, anxious to secure the favour of his masters. From the Government report, it seems, the authorities themselves were not convinced of what Gainda Singh had said or reported. The authorities sent four respectable people in order to find out the truth of Gainda Singh's information. These men went to Guru Ram Singh and were initiated as Kukas. They submitted the following report:

“One night, however, he (Ram Singh) said that his disciples had been molested in Amritsar, Ferozepore and other places, but every one of his followers (being under Divine protection) was equal to 100 other men, European soldiers included.... He had planted off disciples in the Amritsar police who, had he chosen, would, in half an hour, have rid the country of every European in it, but the time had not yet come. No drill took place in their presence.... On another occasion he told them that the English reign would cease; its roots had not stuck very deep.”⁴

In the foot-note at page 2447, Mr. Macnabb writes (his enquiry dated 4-11-1871) that Gainda Singh's report about the drilling of the Kukas had not been corroborated.⁵

Capt. Menzies reported that the Kuka disciples “are orderly, obedient; they live frugally, and act up to the tenets of their faith.”⁶ Another native officer reported:

“All with whom I have conversed on the subject laugh at the idea of the movement having any political significance and regard it simply as a religious one.... I do not think that any danger is to be apprehended from the spread of this sect....”⁷

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.* 2449.

Guru Ram Singh and the Imperialist Reaction

The above reports and views show that the Government was absolutely uncertain about the character of this movement in the year 1863. But it had become conscious of the rising storm. It was trying to assess the power and strength of this movement. It had set its secret machinery into action and imposed restrictions on the movements of Guru Ram Singh. From 1863-1866, Guru Ram Singh was placed under many restrictions.

Guru Ram Singh did not stop his work. Between the years 1862-67, he visited a large number of villages in the Duab areas, went to Amritsar at least thrice on the occasions of Baisakhi and Deepawali, and also attended the sacred places at Anandpur and Keshgarh. The British officers and Commissioners dogged his steps and interviewed him from time to time. They even tried to enlist the support of his disciples for their cause but the Guru declined to promise such a support. At times, the Guru visited Amritsar and Anandpur, in spite of the restrictions imposed by the British. In the year 1866, some of the restrictions were removed, not because the authorities were assured of the harmlessness of Guru Ram Singh and his disciples, but because they wanted to probe him more thoroughly. The Deputy Commissioner of Ambala and the authorities at Amritsar and Ludhiana became more vigilant and they submitted their views and reports to the Government offering careful observations.

Report of R. G. Taylor (1866)

In the year 1866, the most important report about the nature of the Namdhari movement and the aims of Guru Ram Singh was submitted by Col. R. G. Taylor, the Commissioner and Superintendent of Ambala. In his letter dated the 11th September 1866, he wrote for the Panjab Government "a detailed survey of the Kuka movement." The following extracts of his reports may be noted here. In para 4 of his letter he said:

"I have received verbal warnings from men of great intelligence and consideration like Abdool Nubbe Khan,

one of the Patiala Ministers and Moulvi Rujjab Ali Khan."

In para 8, he wrote:

"It is my thorough belief that these lads (Kookas) mean war sooner or later, and I strongly recommend my Government to be beforehand with them."

In para 13, he recommended the arrest of Guru Ram Singh and offered to do it himself. In the same para, he wrote to warn the Government:

"Ludhiana is unprotected in the midst of the Jat population who have got this Kooka wind effectually into their heads."

In para 17, of his letter he quoted a Persian poet to give afurther warning to the authorities:

"You may stop the fountain head with a bare bodkin, when it becomes a river you will not be able to cross it on an elephant."

Para 18 linked the activities of Guru Ram Singh with the nature of the activities of Guru Gobind. It recorded:

"The new Guru has no *genuine religious* sentiments. The whole drift of his reformation being apparently to consolidate the power of Sikhism with a view to political ends. I think it is possible this was not the original intention, but I fully believe that it has been the result, and further I am of the opinion it was the natural result of any religious revival among a warlike race panting to recover their much-loved land and to restore the glories of their sect. Ram Singh may have commenced as a mild religious reformer in the fashion of Nanak, but his stirring lieutenants are hurrying him into a more near imitation of the warlike Guru Gobind."⁸

The Panjab Government forwarded the report of the Commissioner to the Government of India. At the same time, it refused to permit the arrest of Guru Ram Singh

⁸ Foreign Political Despatch to the Secretary of State dated the 8th October, No. 171, enclosing the report of Col. R. G. Taylor.

at that stage. It, however, decided to request the Supreme Government to establish a telegraph office at Ludhiana as well as to adopt other precautionary measures.

The Government of India, at this stage, decided to send their first report of the rise of the Kuka sect to the Secretary of State in England. The letter is quoted below⁹ :

“We have the honour to forward for the information of Her Majesty’s Government, the accompanying copy of a letter and above enclosures from the Punjab Government, reporting the existence and serious progress among the Sikhs of a nominally religious sect, called Kookas, under the leadership of one Ram Singh of Bhainee, in the neighbourhood of Ludhiana.

“2. As the Government of Punjab observes, and there can be no doubt that a widespread and constantly increasing fraternity of a more or less secret character, apparently well-organised and devotedly attached to their chief must contain the element of mischief.

“3. We have instructed the Punjab Government that... as a measure of precaution we intend garrisoning the fort of Ludhiana, with two companies of a Goorkha Regiment.”

The Secretary of State acknowledged this report about the Kukas in his political despatch to India No. 11, dated 16th January, 1867 in the following words:

“I have perused with much interest, the letter of Your Excellency’s Government, No. 171 of the 8th October, 1866, respecting the appearance of a new sect of Sikhs, called the Kookas, of whom Col. Reynell Taylor reports that men of great intelligence and consideration are disposed to consider the confederacy to be fraught with mischief.”¹⁰

The above letters embodied the first important reaction

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Vide* Selections from Despatches from 1st January, 1866 to 31st December 1867.

of the Government and the Secretary of State on the Namdhari movement. They reveal that the Kuka movement had assumed a wider political importance in the eyes of the Imperialists.

Kuka Dak System

After this, the Government of India and the State Government in the Punjab kept a vigilant eye on the activities of the Kukas. In the year 1867, the Government learnt many more things about the Kukas. One such important information revealed to the authorities the nature of the postal system of the Kukas. The Government of the Panjab reported to the Government of India in their letter No. 157-54 dated 2nd February, 1867, the following details of the Kuka Postal System:

"The 'Kookas', or as they are sometimes called the 'Sant Khalsas', have a private post of their own which appears to be admirably organised. Confidential letters are circulated much in the same way as the fiery cross was carried through by a highland clan in Scottish by-gone days. A Kooka, on the arrival at his village of another of the same sect with a despatch, at once leaves off whatever work he may be engaged upon: if in the midst of a repast, not another morsel is eaten; he asks no question, but taking the message starts off at a run and conveys it to the next relief, or to his destination. Important communications are sent verbally and are not committed to writing. In carrying messages, they are said by Major Perkins, to make great detours, to avoid the Grand Trunk Road. There can be little doubt that though this machinery has been introduced to work a religious reform, yet in the hands of designing and unscrupulous men it can easily be made an engine of political power. Reports have reached Major Perkins that the Kookas openly talk of being masters of the country at some time when all the land will profess the new faith."¹¹

¹¹ *Vide* Foreign-Political-A Progs. 111-112 of March 1867.

The above dak system was greatly instrumental in creating a sense of seriousness and importance about the mission of Guru Ram Singh among his disciples. It produced secrecy and confidence in their ranks. It saved them from the secret agents commissioned by the English as well as from the postal censor of the authorities. It also underlined their great discipline as well as their faith in the significance of their mission. The system was also a measure of economy. It embodied their ideas of a boycott.

GURU RAM SINGH'S VISIT TO ANANDPUR SAHIB

In March 1867, Guru Ram Singh decided to make a visit to the Anandpur fair in Hoshiarpur along with a large number of his followers. This visit also opened the eyes of the authorities in respect of the strength and following of the Guru. Col. McAndrew, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, reported the following details about the visit of Guru Ram Singh:

"On the morning of the 19th, Ram Singh arrived in state followed by some 20 mounted men (Subas) and about 2,500 people on foot. As he passed in front of our camp, I went out and directed Soodh Singh, one of his Head Mahants, who had led the procession on horse back, to dismount and pay his respects to Mr. Perkins, the Deputy Commissioner. On this Ram Singh and all his headmen immediately dismounted, and I introduced him to Mr. Perkins, who took him into his tent where we held a long conversation; the followers standing outside. Ram Singh said, his object was to perform the *Darshan* (worship) at the shrine of Guru Gobind Singh, but that he was ready to do whatever we ordered; that if we objected, he would return as he came. Ram Singh agreed to take not more than 100 followers when he visited the shrine of Keshgarh and also not to recite the Shabad."¹²

The above report does not seem to reflect the truth in all its details. According to the version in the Namdhari

¹² *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 273-284 of August 1872, 245-58.

literature, Guru Ram Singh refused to give an assurance that his followers will not read the Shabad or raise the slogans. He only agreed to have 100 followers if the Mahants of the shrine were so much afraid of them.

In the evening, Mr. McAndrew along with Sardar Attar Singh visited the place where Guru Ram Singh had encamped. He reports the following about the visit:

"He was sitting amongst his followers under a huge tent. About 5,000 people were sitting around him and a number of disciples seemed to be coming and going. There was no noise or disturbance in the camp and everybody was sitting quietly. All the men and women seemed to be in good and clean dresses. I did not observe any of the men in a state of agitation. Guru Ram Singh received me cordially."¹³

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner of Hoshiarpur had deputed Fazl Hussain, Inspector of Police, to keep a watch on the situation and to make a detailed report of the activities of the Kukas. Fazl Hussain reported in the following manner:

"After a personal interview with Ram Singh, I am of the opinion that he in no way acts in opposition to the British Government; but some of his Subas are bad men who injured his reputation.... Ram Singh bathes himself thrice daily, and at about 2 o'clock every morning takes to reading the Granth which he understands perfectly. He abhors everything wicked.... Ram Singh gives food, clothing and shelter, to the poor. A large number of followers of the other faith are embracing Kookaism. In two days in the Anandpur fair he converted 50 followers.... His followers believe that Guru Ram Singh is the Incarnation from God.... Ram Singh had 40 horses for himself and his Subas and drums were beaten in his procession and the flags were hoisted."¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.* ¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Fazl Hussain again wrote:

"I asked again and again about the birth-place of many of his followers but I failed to get this information. Every Kooka gave me the same answer that they had completely forgotten their original villages and now their only village was Bhainee Sahib and their only father was Satguru Ram Singh."¹⁵

Fazl Hussain also referred to the controversy that took place between the Nihang Sikhs and Guru Ram Singh on this occasion. The other Sikhs are said to have raised the following objections about Guru Ram Singh and his mission:

"That he sets himself a God.

(ii) That when making a convert, he does not give him Amrit to drink, as is the custom, but he whispers a Mantra in his ear.

(iii) That when he makes a convert he says to him: 'Janam Guru Huzroo, Urbashee Guru Bhainee', whereas the Sikhs say 'Janam Guru Patna, Urbashee Anandpur.'

(iv) That whereas the Sikhs entering a place of worship do not untie their hair, or remove their turbans, Kookas do.

(v) That Kookas in exciting themselves to such a degree to be at times insensible, act like Mohammedan Faqirs and cannot be Guru Sikhs."

To all the above charges Guru Ram Singh replied back as reported by Fazal Hussain in the following lines:

"To this Ram Singh replied that, if they really acted up to the Sikh religion, they would appreciate his doctrine; that they act quite contrary to the 'Grunth' by eating meat, drinking, lying, licentiousness, female infanticide etc., and that therefore Kookas do not consider them Sikhs."¹⁶

¹⁵ *Ibid.* ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

In the same report Fazl Hussain recorded that Ambala, Ludhiana, Ferozepore, Patiala and Nabha States had become the strongholds of the Kukas. They were less numerous at Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Lahore, Sialkot and Gurdaspur.¹⁷

OTHER ACTIVITIES

It was also during this period that many of the Kukas were found digging up graves and other places of superstition. Kuka Dewar Singh was convicted and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. In the Ludhiana district, a party of 22 Kukas defaced a place of worship at the village of Chuhpar, Police Station Dehlom. The damage was of rupees one hundred, but the case failed for want of sufficient evidence. The Deputy Inspector of Police at Dehlom reported that 27 graves had been destroyed at a village named Khuttree Koseh. Four accused were punished with six months' rigorous imprisonment, besides fines. The destruction of Peer Khana and Muree was also reported at Khanna. The punishment was again 6 months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 10. Similar reports also poured in from Amritsar, Jullundur, Gurdaspur, Gujranwala, Sialkot.¹⁸

The above reports clearly show that the Kuka disciples were keen to finish all superstition in the land of the five rivers, and for this purpose they were sometimes prepared to take even the law in their own hands.

In October 1867, Capt. Menzies sent a spy to Bhainee Sahib on the occasion of the Diwali festival. The secret agent reported an assembly of 3,000 Kukas before whom Guru Ram Singh made the following points:

"He was *coerced* in 1863, but in return he had their ships swamped in the ocean and the Governor-General died. The Satguru is drifting the Russians *this way*.

The Russians are not coming their own accord."¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.* ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2456-57.

¹⁹ *Vide* Foreign-Political-A Progs. 202-3 of February 1868. (Such reports of secret agents are not considered credit-worthy by the Kukas.)

Guru Ram Singh and the Imperialist Reaction

SUBAS OF GURU RAM SINGH

This secret agent brought to the Government a complete list of the 22 Subas of Guru Ram Singh, as well as the regions in which they were functioning. The names and the regions are given below²⁰:

1. Labh Singh, Blind (40 years) — Who preached in Jullundur and Ambala districts with great success.
2. Lakha Singh (28 years) — Functioned in Hoshiarpur and Jullundur.
3. Sahib Singh (34 years) — Was an important Suba and accompanied Guru Ram Singh everywhere.
4. Kahan Singh (60 years) — Was active in Hoshiarpur, Malwa, Ambala and Kohistan.
5. Narain Singh (32 years) — Muktsar and Ferozepore.
6. Soodh Singh (42 years) — Ambala, Malwa and Majha.
7. Hookma Singh (25 years) — Ludhiana and Majha.
8. Pahara Singh (37 years) — Ludhiana and Gujaranwala.
9. Jawahir Singh (46 years) — Ferozepore and adjoining places.
10. Sumund Singh (40 years) — Ferozepore.
11. Aroor Singh (40 years) — Amritsar.
12. Wussawa Singh (50 years) — Karnal and Ambala.

²⁰ Ibid.



KUKAS

13. Bibi Hukmee (20 years) — Was functioning in Amritsar and Hoshiarpur, and she preached with great success converting a large number of Sikhs to Kookaism.
14. Jetha Singh (35 years) — Sialkot and Lahore.
15. Gopal Singh (35 years) — Lived and ran a shop at Bhainee.
16. Brahma Singh (45 years) — Jullundur, Gujarawala, Lahore and Sialkot.
17. Khazan Singh (35 years) — Lahore and Amritsar.
18. Surmukh Singh (30 years) — Patiala.
19. Harnam Singh (28 years) — Jind and Patiala.
20. Junit Singh (50 years) — Sialkot and around.
21. Malook Singh (35 years) — Ferozepore.
22. Sadhu Singh (32 years) — Ludhiana.

The appointment and functioning of the Subas meant an important development in the Namdhari organisation because it showed that the sources were being developed and the roots were being dug deeper for significant aims and ambitions. This also showed Guru Ram Singh was laying the basis of a permanent organisation to spread his mission of religious revival, social reformation, and possibly political emancipation. The Subas were not only his eyes and ears projected in the length and breadth of the Panjab, but also his spokesmen and representatives, for a regular contact was essential in such movements.

MORE SERIOUS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE YEAR 1868

As the year 1868 opened, the Government of India came

to know of further developments in regard to the Namdhari movement. For example, the Governor-General, Lord Lawrence, received two letters from Mr. Donovan on 7th September and 30th September. Mr. Donovan was perhaps a railway employee at Doraha (via Ludhiana) who claimed to have obtained information from a Suba of Guru Ram Singh. He wrote to the Governor-General:

"A most dreadful thing is now going on in the country.... This man (Ram Singh) is now in the Malwa country collecting more followers; at present he has gathered two lakhs of persons to rebel against us, and finally to expel us from the Punjab An insurrection is expected to take place some time in the early part of next year.

"The Kookas have a private dak of their own, going about with letters or verbal message; this man goes in great haste to a certain stage where he is relieved by another, who takes from him either the letter or verbal message; their strict order is not to exchange a syllable with any individual whilst conveying things. We ought to be very careful in this."²¹

Mr. Donovan also mentioned in the same letter that Guru Ram Singh had made arrangements with a relative of the Raja of Patiala for getting aid.²²

In his¹ second letter of 30th September, Mr. Donovan was more explicit. He disclosed to the authorities that Guru Ram Singh had uttered the following words at his last meeting:

"Brethren By the word of our God and according to the doctrines of Guru Gobind Singh, we have met at this time to consult about the best mode of expelling ... all the Christians in the country, India, all throughout its length and breadth....

²¹ Foreign-Political-A Progs. 383-85 of September, 1868.

²² *Ibid.*

"I, Ram Singh, am sent by Guru Gobind Singh, to deliver the Christians into the hands of our tribes (the Sikhs) and the axe ye now see hanging to my waist is from Him, as a token or sign . . . I have all the powers of God, and that with me nothing is an impossibility." ²³

Mr. Donovan strongly recommended to the Government:

"Let us rule with a rod of iron, knowing they are heathens and a Godless people. The heart of every Briton burns when we see the ingratitude of the Blacks The plant is yet tender, and can be bent at pleasure; hereafter it will not yield This case should be dealt with in a doubly severe manner than the Fenian Insurrection." ²⁴

Referring to the Afghan and tribal troubles of the English, Mr. Donovan added:

"Let not those behind rise in open rebellion against us when we pursue our enemies in front. The Kookas are assembling in numbers in various places and raising loud cries to their Gods, that the time may soon come when they may have an opportunity of putting the Christians to the sword and of watering their lands with their blood. This movement is a type of that which has been in India before, during the reign of the Mughal princes, for when the Mohammedans fought against the Hindus, Guru Gobind Singh raised men, money, in precisely the same manner as things are going on now." ²⁵

Mr. Donovan again quoted Guru Ram Singh as having addressed the following words to his disciples:

"Hear ye all noble Sikhs now here present that I am come to deliver you from the yoke of Christians We shall fight for independence." ²⁶

²³ *Vide* Foreign-Political-A Progs. 197 of October 1868.

²⁴ *Ibid.* ²⁵ *Ibid.* ²⁶ *Ibid.*

Mr. Donovan further informed the authorities that Mangal Singh, a relative of the Maharaja of Patiala had given rupees four lakhs to the Kukas to aid rebellion. He said:

"The Kookas are daily expected to rise and all the native chiefs are sworn in to join them....The cry of rebellion has gone throughout India; so let us not be lenient. Let us now hang, confiscate, reward, disarm, pull down or transport.... The Malwa country and the States of Rajputana in general stink with rebellion and the whole place is now boiling for Christian blood."²⁷

From the nature of the above report, it may be presumed that Mr. Donovan was just like any another enthusiastic member of the ruling race who was anxious about the continuity of the British rule in India, and who sensed the danger which the Namdhari movement posed to the imperialists, in their keenness to keep their rule intact. It seems, he got his information from a person who was anxious to be rewarded for his anti-Kuka role. Repeatedly, Mr. Donovan pressed in his letters to the authorities that the person who had given him information deserved reward and consideration.²⁸ He demanded for him expenses for going to Simla in order to satisfy the Government about his bona fides, and the correctness of the information he had furnished so far. It can easily be presumed that Mr. Donovan was looking towards the prevailing rumours in the Panjab through a magnifying glass. He was, however, sincere in his anxiety for the British rule and frankly racial-minded in regard to the ingratitude of the 'Blacks'. In fact, this was more or less the nature of mental development which an average Englishman showed from time to time as a partisan in the imperial game.

On the other hand, the Inspector-General of Police, Panjab, also sent a report to the Panjab Government em-

²⁷ *Ibid.* ²⁸ *Ibid.*

bodily his views on the Namdhari movement in the year 1868. He expressed himself in the following words:

"The strict surveillance which was maintained over Ram Singh was relaxed in 1866, and he was permitted by the Government to wander about everywhere he wished. The cessation of our interference has removed the exalted importance it gave to Ram Singh. The natives thought that there must be some truth in the pretensions of the Kooka hierarch, when a powerful Government like the British adopted stringent measures towards him."²⁹

In his next para, No. 5, he further theorised :

"Whilst Ram Singh was in quasi-confinement at Bhainee there was a charm of mystery and esotery about the man, to which our espionage perhaps added a spice of fascinating persecution. All this was calculated to attract the susceptible."³⁰

I was written by the Inspector-General of Police that the Kuka movement was declining. He mentioned and perhaps concocted a number of incidents among the Namdharis to satisfy the authorities about the genuineness of his information. But he was only trying to deceive the Government which might one day find itself in the position of a man sleeping at the mouth of a volcano. It seems, perhaps, the authorities were ignorant of further spread of the Kuka activity in the year 1868. It was during this period that the Kukas extended their influence towards Kashmir and Nepal.

KASHMIR AND NEPAL

Hira Singh, one of Satguru Ram Singh's Subas, had already been sent to meet the Kashmir ruler. The Kashmir ruler agreed to enlist a regiment of Kukas and also appointed Hira Singh to command it as a subordinate of Col. Hukma Singh. Hira Singh came back to the headquarters of Guru

²⁹ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 273-284 of August 1872. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

Ram Singh and he took back with him 175 Kukas to Jammu. These men formed two Companies in the armies of the Maharaja of Kashmir. They were sent to garrison the fort of Naushera and they remained there for three months. After that they were stationed in the cantonment of Butmaloo from where they were removed to Muzaffarpur. From there the Kuka companies were sent to the Kuthai fort, and further on to the Dossutta fort.

Meanwhile, disturbance broke out in the Panjab at Malerkotla, and the Kashmir ruler dismissed all his Kuka soldiers in the year 1872. Similarly the Kukas had joined the forces of the Nepal King, and were actually drilling his soldiers. It is clear that the Government of India came to know of this expansion of the Kuka movement to the ranks of the adjoining States not earlier than the years 1870-71. A fuller account of Kuka activities in Kashmir, Nepal and Central Asia will be given in separate chapters.

As time wore on, the Namdhari movement spread in all parts of Panjab as well as in other States of British India. The Subas became more active and the followers still more numerous. By the end in 1871, their number had swelled to more than 4,30,000. Guru Ram Singh was openly holding his Darbars and directing his Subas.

In the year 1871, one of his disciples Brahma Singh became extremely active and dangerously seditious against the British Government. The Deputy Superintendent of Police at Gujranwala, reported his movements to the higher authorities. Brahma Singh asked the Kuka disciples not to build houses, not to lend money to others, and to keep as much cash as possible. The idea was that they should be prepared for the war or disturbance which was about to break out at the Command of the Guru. Money in cash would then be very useful. He told the people, "war will commence in Kartik and Maghar in 1928" which meant October and November 1871. He also informed the Kuka disciples that the Maharaja of Nepal, other Rajas and the Sardars of the Panjab, for the purpose of this war, had also subordinated themselves to Guru Ram Singh

and would help with arms, men and money. He asked the Namdharis to keep an axe. In one of his addresses, he uttered the following words:

“See brethren Namdharis ! Har Gobind Sahib has become Satguru and appeared again, mounted on horse back, he has vindicated his authority at Amritsar in the slaughter house, his followers on that occasion being the Sikhs who had, in former times, become martyrs for their faith. Have patience, many such things will occur again; and if the present rulers of our country should dare to desecrate it still more, and interfere with our ceremonies, or meddle with us in any way, then it will happen in many places. But there is no fear for us. The days for the fulfilment of our prophecies, and the restoration of the Khalsa Raj are close at hand. Be ready and faithful. Recently a holy brother was in a trance for two days and saw vision in which the village of Bhainee (Guru Ram Singh’s residence) appeared to him surrounded by a large Sikh army Guru Ram Singh led them in person and proclaimed that they were the army of martyrs, destined to restore the Sikh faith and supremacy in its original purity and integrity. The Chukkar (quoit) and ‘Safu’ (Turban) found at Amritsar are symbols of martyrdom, indicated to us by the Guru Har Gobind Sahib.”³¹

The Police Officer informed the authorities that Brahma Singh

“is perhaps one of the mutinous sepoys or Sowars of 1857, who adopted a religious disguise to escape identification.”³²

Meanwhile some of the Kukas had already offered themselves for arrest to the Government after their attacks on the butchers at Amritsar. They were put on trial and some of them hanged. All this created a sensation throughout the Panjab. The Government, by this time, was more

³¹ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 273-284 of August 1872, 2495. ³² *Ibid.*

or less convinced of the violent nature of the Namdhari movement. It was in fact looking for an opportunity to come down upon it with an extra heavy hand. It seemed, as the year 1870 closed, that the ranks of the Kukas and the minds of the Imperialists were preparing for a show-down. It was in the above circumstances that the year 1872 proved to be one of the most eventful in the history of the Namdhari movement. Its events may be unfolded in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

EVENTS LEADING TO THE ARREST OF GURU RAM SINGH

I shall Pass Ten Months in the Womb of a Jat Mother
and Come Back to Avenge Myself. Your Justice is a
Lie. Your Death and Downfall is Near at Hand. We
shall be Born again, Hold the Sword in our Hand, and
Wage a War which will Destroy Your Rule.

A Kuka
(before being hanged)

LORD DISRAELI had admitted in the British Parliament as early as the year 1857 that:

“Our empire in India was, indeed, founded upon the old principle of *Divide et Impera*.¹

This very policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ was followed excessively by the British in the ‘post-mutiny’ period for maintaining and preserving their empire. This was the period when the rising forces of Nationalism were making it more and more difficult for them to keep their hold on this country. Therefore, the application of such a policy was all the more needed.

Murder of Butchers on 15th June 1871 at Amritsar

One of the important means at their disposal to follow their game of ‘Divide and Rule’ was concerning the question of cow-slaughter. This question enabled them, throughout the period of their rule, to place the Trojan Horse of disunity amongst the Indians. It proved the most effective means for setting the Hindus and the Muslims against each other.

In the Panjab, they began to play upon this factor immediately after its annexation. In fact, they turned the question of cow-slaughter into a major problem between the Hindus and the Muslims. Their policy in this connection was altered from time to time as the circumstances demand-

¹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 July, 1857, 447.

ed. After the First Sikh War when Lawrence had become the British Resident at Lahore, he issued the following proclamation on behalf of the Governor-General on 24th March, 1847:

"The priests of Amritsar having complained of annoyances, this is to make known to all concerned by the order of the Governor-General; British subjects are forbidden to enter the temple called the Darbar at Amritsar ... with their shoes on. The kine are not to be killed at Amritsar, nor are the Sikhs to be molested or in any way to be interfered with"²

The above proclamation was issued at a time when Maharaja Dalip Singh was the ruler; Lal Singh and Tej Singh were in favour, and Rani Jindan was the Mother-regent.³

After the Second Sikh War, when the State of Lahore was declared annexed to the British empire, the attitude of the English underwent a complete change on the question of cow slaughter. They issued the following orders:

"No one should be allowed to interfere with the practice by his neighbour which that neighbour's religion permits."⁴

The new orders were a great provocation to the Hindus and the Sikhs. If we go deeper into both the proclamations issued by the English we deduce the following. Firstly, it seems that after the First Sikh War a number of English people had tried to defile the Har-Mandir Sahib by attempting to walk into it with their shoes on. The sale of beef had also started. This is why the British Resident had issued the first proclamation, as a bait to the injured feelings of the Sikhs, and as a slight compensation for political injuries inflicted upon the State of Maharaja Dalip Singh as a result of the First Sikh War. After the Second Sikh War there was no such necessity for respecting the suscepti-

² *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 45-61 of 29th July, 1871.

³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.*

bilities of the Sikhs. The most important aim before the English was to perpetuate their rule through a game of 'Divide and Rule'; hence the modification and change of attitude.

The encouragement given by the English to cow-slaughter after the annexation of the Panjab led to serious consequences. Tension and resentment between the Hindus and the Muslims in Amritsar began to rise. Both communities were well balanced in their numbers, although the Sikhs formed a small minority. The Muslims began to sell beef in the streets instead of selling it to the Muslims inside the slaughter-house. Many riots occurred but the authorities were able to control the situation before it went out of hand. The Officiating Commissioner at Amritsar reported in his letter No. 150 of 21st June, 1871 to the Government of the Panjab that, after the new orders, a very rapid increase had taken place in the sale of beef and that the Muslim butchers did not take proper precautions.⁵ Before this, the Officiating Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, Mr. F. N. Birch, had written to the Commissioner of the same Division in his letter No. 353 dated the 15th May, 1871 that:

"Crowds of Hindus protested against kine-killing."⁶

But he had also added:

"I think the Hindus are too pretentious in asking for the sale of beef in the city to be stopped. Their disorderly conduct does not entitle them to any extra consideration."⁷

All the above reports pertain to the first half of the year 1871. The Government persisted in its appeasement of the Muslims and the situation kept deteriorating. When the Sikhs and Hindus collected at Amritsar from all parts of rural Panjab on the occasions of Holi, Diwali and

⁵ Para 14 of his letter vide Home/Judicial-A Progs. 45-61 of 29th July, 1871.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

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Baisakhi, they were shocked to know of this provoking encouragement to cow-slaughter in the holy city. This was the time when many of the Hindu and Sikh political leaders like Dewan Mool Raj, Raja Chatter Singh, Raja Sher Singh and Dewan Boota Singh were in prison. Maharaja Dalip Singh had been sent out of Panjab and had been converted to Christianity. This was also the time when the leather trade in the Panjab, and specially in the city of Amritsar began to flourish. Agents of the English firms in London visited Amritsar for raw hides. Even young calves were slaughtered for better quality of hides. It became a major profession for the Muslim traders and was hardly a part of their religion, as the authorities seemed to make out.

The innocent, illiterate and religious-minded people of the Panjab found a new picture of ugliness and injury in the holy city of Amritsar, which completely differed from the picture of those days when Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors ruled at Lahore. They could never be reconciled to such a change. Even when the Muslim hawked beef in the Hindu localities, they were let off by the Magistrates or the Judges after a small fine. In many cases they were even acquitted. Consequently, tension increased. Riots and disputes became common.

Bhai Deva Singh put a cow-bone before the Holy Granth and told the congregation that he had found it inside the boundaries of the Har Mandir. The Hindus and the Sikhs began to collect and riots followed. Deva Singh was imprisoned in 1871 and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment. Many more riots occurred. Tension developed new heat. The Hindus effected an economic and trade boycott of the Muslims. The authorities including the Commissioner called many conferences of prominent Hindu and Sikh representatives. He explained to them that the earlier proclamation of Lawrence, prohibiting the sale of beef, was only of a temporary nature. It was to remain in force till the time of Maharaja Dalip Singh's rule. After annexation it was bound to be changed. The arrest of Deva Singh,

the threats given by the Commissioner, filing of suits against 22 Hindus for riots and boycott of Muslims in trade, made the situation in the Punjab highly explosive. As soon as the Commissioner left the city of Amritsar, riots started again.

It was in the above circumstances, when the situation had become intolerable for the Hindus and the Sikhs, when the authorities did not relent in their pro-Muslim attitude, and when all constitutional means to stop the hawking of beef had failed, some of the Namdharis took the law in their own hands. On the night of 14th and 15th June, 1871 an attack was made on the butchers of Amritsar. Four of them, Pira, Jiwan, Shadi and Amami were murdered. Karam Din, Ilahi Bux and Khiba were left half dead. The murderers used weapons which were supplied to them by a constable Lal Singh who was in fact a Namdhari. This attack was made between 12 and 1 o'clock at the dead of night. The Government were able to find a turban and a steel disc as their clues.⁸

When the authorities learnt about this attack and the murder of the butchers, they deputed Mr. Christie to apprehend those who were responsible for it. He used all his third degree methods to rope in many of the innocent citizens of Amritsar. Heera Singh, Ahya and Jai Ram were tortured and made to confess that they had actually committed the crime. All of them were made approvers, and 12 other citizens, namely, Sant Ram, Ram Kishan, Manna Singh, Jawala Singh, Pannaji, Mula, Nihal Singh, Mayya, Sunder Singh, Bhup Singh, Teka and Shoba were sent to the Sessions. Actually none of these was responsible for the murders, but still all of them were committed to the Sessions on 25th July, 1871 by Mr. Christie.⁹

Later, when the real culprits came forward to **confess** their crime, Mr. Christie reported to the authorities that he had been put on the wrong track by an informer Hira, who

⁸ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 57-58 of February 1872.

⁹ *Ibid.*

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had come forward to confess the guilt. He also intimated to the Government that Jai Ram, a respectable broker of the city had admitted that he had instigated these men to commit this crime.¹⁰ But the real fact was that this Police Officer had got these men and other citizens of Amritsar to confess the crime which they had never committed.

One factor greatly helped the disclosure of this case. When Guru Ram Singh came to know that the lives of innocent people were being endangered for the murders committed by the Kukas, he directed those Kukas to go and surrender themselves to the authorities so that innocent people may not be hanged. It was in such circumstances that Behla Singh, Fateh Singh, Hakim Singh and Lehna Singh were hanged. They went to the gallows singing sacred verses, without any trace of fear and repentance on their faces. They seemed to feel they had performed a duty towards their faith. Constable Lal Singh, Lehna Singh and another of his namesake were exiled. Ahya, Hira Singh and Jai Ram were also sentenced to terms of imprisonment for giving wrong information to the Government.

Sant Nidhan Singh Alam gives the following description about the heroism of those four Kukas who were sentenced to death:

“The news of death sentence on the four Kukas spread in the streets of Amritsar in the most electrical manner. There was praise and appreciation for their bravery on everybody's lips. The public was deeply impressed by the way these Kukas had confessed their guilt and saved others from the gallows. From the day of judgment to the day of hanging, these Kukas were allowed to visit the Har Mandir, as well as prepare their own food. 15th September was their day of dating with death. On that fine morning, the four Kukas bathed in the Holy Tank; the ‘prasad’ was prepared and distributed. What a beautiful scene it was! The patriots

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

intoxicated with love, were starting off to kiss the gallows. Chanting holy songs, and performing 'Kirtan', the party moved towards the hanging ground. The large assembly of onlookers was amazed. Were these Sikhs for hanging? They appeared absolutely unconcerned about death. Were they proceeding to meet the bride of death? The crowd thickened. Before death they demanded two things. Firstly, they should not be hanged with leather strings. Secondly, they would themselves put the hanging ropes in their own necks. Both the wishes were granted. After saying their final prayers, the four Kukas embraced death amidst slogans of Sat-Sri-Akal."¹¹

Mother of the Martyr

Hakim Singh, one of the martyrs, was the only son of his widow mother. This brave lady had put a Tilak mark on the foreheads of the four Kukas. She performed the last rites of her only son. She recited verses from Holy Granth. When someone condoled to her for the death of her son, she replied: "Today, I feel blessed because my son has given his life for the sake of the cow, the poor people, and the freedom of the country."¹² In fact, the whole city was inspired and thrilled by the manner in which these people had gone to the gallows.

Attack on Butchers at Raikot, 15 July 1871

A mention may also be made of the murder of butchers at Raikot. As early as 1856, the Government had permitted the establishment of a slaughter-house at Raikot near Ludhiana. It was, unfortunately, located outside the city near a Gurudwara, which was associated with the name of the 10th Guru. The birds carried the bones and bits from the slaughter-house, and perched themselves on the temple walls to scratch those bones. In this way, the purity of the temple was frequently defiled. The temple priests narrated this to some of the Kukas who were on a visit

¹¹ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, *Kranti-kari Sat-Guru*, 129.

¹² *Ibid.*, 130.

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to this Gurudwara. On 15th July, 1871, one month after the murder of Amritsar butchers, the attack was made on the slaughter-house of Raikot. Two butchers were killed and 7 were injured. But the real butchers in the eyes of the Kukas escaped. Now, it became a serious problem for the authorities to protect the butchers. However, a special police protection was given to them. A reward of Rs. 1,000 was offered by the Deputy Commissioner to any person who gave a clue to these murders. The approver was promised pardon. The Panjab Government was able to trace out the Kukas who had made this attack with the help of the Maharaja of Patiala. Seven Kukas were arrested. Gulab Singh turned approver. Mastan Singh, Gurmukh Singh and Mangal Singh were hanged on 15th August, 1871 in public outside the slaughter-house. Giani Rattan Singh of Mandi village and Giani Rattan Singh of Naiwala village were tried by the Sessions Judge of Ludhiana and they were hanged on 26th November, 1871 near the jail.

At the time of death, they maintained the tradition of their fearlessness and the glory of their faith. They put on white dresses after bathing and sang the holy verses; one of them Giani Rattan Singh of Mandi, addressed the following words to an English Officer:

“I shall again pass 10 months in the womb of a Jat mother and come back to avenge myself. Your justice is just a lie. Your death and downfall is near at hand. We shall be born again, hold the sword in our own hands and wage a war which will destroy your rule.”¹³

Government Decides to Fix the Responsibility on Guru Ram Singh

After the incident of Raikot and the execution of the Kukas, the Government had more or less reached the conclusion “that these murders had been deliberately and repeatedly planned...”¹⁴ Ten days after the murders of Raikot, Mr. Cowen, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana wrote

¹³ Nahar Singh, *Namdhari Itihas*, 144.

¹⁴ Home-Judicial Progs 52-53 of 13th January, 1872.

to the authorities that Guru Ram Singh was behind all this activity. He put on record that one Kuka had murdered another in Ferozepore upon which Guru Ram Singh gave a sermon and asked: "Did they not know of any enemy of their religion whom they could kill?" He also referred to kine slaughter at Amritsar. On this, several of his followers cried out: "If you order it we will kill the butchers." Guru Ram Singh replied: "Don't do anything in haste. The time has not yet come."¹⁵ Similarly, the same year, the authorities obtained further evidence about Kuka determination to exterminate the curse of cow killing. Again, it was in the same year (1871) that the Government learned about the extension of Kuka influence to Kashmir and Nepal. The authorities were anxious to find out a way to prosecute Guru Ram Singh. The legal avenues were, perhaps, not open to them. On 9th September, 1871 the Officiating Secretary to the Panjab Government wrote a confidential letter to the Government of India, in which the following views were expressed.

"The Lt.-Governor of Panjab considers that it will be difficult, and may be impossible to obtain any such evidence as would warrant his prosecution in a criminal court."¹⁶

The authorities in Ludhiana were anxious to rope in Guru Ram Singh, but they did not want a case to be filed against him which might fail for want of evidence. In fact, they wanted him to be exiled for life without having to prove his guilt in a Court of Law. Only a suitable opportunity was being awaited. This was, unfortunately, provided through the attacks which the Kukas made on Malodh and Malerkotla, in January, 1872.

Attacks on Malodh (14th January 1872) and Malerkotla (15th January 1872)

The cause of Malerkotla incident was the same, i.e..

¹⁵ Report of Mr. Cowan, dated the 24th July, 1871, vide Home-Judicial Progs. 45-61-A of 24th July, 1871.

¹⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 52-53 of 13th January, 1872.

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cow-slaughter. The native Muslim State had offered the same provocation which the authorities in British India had afforded to the Kukas. Secondly, the Kukas were greatly agitated due to the execution of their colleagues at Ludhiana and Amritsar. Thirdly, they had been greatly inspired by the glorious way in which the 'martyrs' of Raikot and Amritsar had gone to the gallows.

In the second week of January, 1872, they began to collect at the Kuka headquarters, Bhaini Sahib, for the purpose of chalking out a scheme of revenge against the Muslim officers of Malerkotla, who had shown a keen and revengeful attitude in permitting cow-slaughter before the very eyes of the Hindus and the Sikhs. The occasion was provided by the Maghi Mela when more than 500 persons had already assembled at Bhaini Sahib. Many of the Kukas, including their leader Hira Singh, were greatly agitated. They openly declared they would take revenge for the death of Giani Rattan Singh.

On 13th January, Sarfaraz Khan, Deputy Inspector of Police, reached Bhaini Sahib. When he saw the Kukas, specially belonging to the Patiala State, in a fit of frenzy, he approached Guru Ram Singh to control them. According to the version of this Police Officer, Guru Ram Singh "went up to these men with a turban round his neck, and entreated of them not to create a disturbance."¹⁷

The Kukas under Hira Singh almost refused to accept the advice of Guru Ram Singh. Hira Singh pleaded that Guru Tegh Bahadur had given him 'Darshan' and had ordered him to go to Malerkotla for the protection of the cows and to offer himself up as a sacrifice. According to the version of Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, Guru Ram Singh told them:

"If you can stay your hand for a year more I would achieve, without the help of weapons, the object for which you are drawing out your swords. I cannot, however, go against the orders of Guru Tegh Bahadur."¹⁸

¹⁷ See Parliamentary Paper 356—*Kuka Outbreak*, 1872, 9.

¹⁸ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 157.

After this, Hira Singh requested Guru Ram Singh to give them food so that if they died they should have the satisfaction of having eaten at the Guru's feet. The Guru ordered the preparation of 'Langar' for them, and fed them personally with love and affection. They were about 250 in number. When they crossed the limit of Akal Bunga, Hira Singh took out his sword and drew a line upon the ground and cried out in a challenging voice:

"Those who want to offer their head for martyrdom should come across this line."¹⁹

Some others cried out:

"The ship of religion is ready. Let all those who want to embark come forward."²⁰

About 140 crossed the line with determination to die for the protection of the cow and religion.

On 13th January, 1872, they proceeded towards Malerkotla at about 2 p. m. The Government knew all this. Guru Ram Singh himself had sent out that day a special messenger, named Baba Lakha Singh, to the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana informing that some of the Kukas had gone out of his control and they were proceeding towards Malerkotla. Guru Ram Singh's messenger was imprisoned by the Police Officer. But no step was taken to stop the Kukas in their march towards Malerkotla. At about 8 p. m. on the same day, Sarfaraz Khan also submitted a written report to the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana of what he had seen at Bhainee Sahib. The Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana informed the agents of Malerkotla and Jind States. He did not act beyond this. It seems, just as the British had allowed the rebellion of Mool Raj on the eve of the Second Sikh War to spread out in order to provide themselves a glorious opportunity for the annexation of the Panjab, in the same way, the Government, were staying back, as a matter of policy, so that the agitated Kukas might indulge in violence. That alone

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 158.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 158.

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would provide them with the most significant excuse to crush them completely.

Instead of going to Malerkotla, the Kukas under Hira Singh went towards the fort of Malodh which was held by Sardar Badan Singh. It was situated about 20 miles from Ludhiana. There is a background to this venture of the Kukas. Once, the Sardar of Malodh had met Guru Ram Singh at Bhainee Sahib and had asked for any service which he could render to the Guru. At that time Hira Singh was sitting nearby and had replied: "We shall approach you when there is a need." Hira Singh remembered that incident. He wanted horses and weapons. In the afternoon of 14th January, 1872 they proceeded towards Malodh and reached there as the evening shadows were lengthening. Hira Singh reminded Sardar Badan Singh of Malodh of that previous conversation, and asked for horses and weapons. When the Sardar came to know of the intentions of the Kukas he refused to oblige them. This led to a conflict in which two men from each side were killed. Sardar Badan Singh was himself injured.²¹

After this, the Kukas proceeded towards Malerkotla which was at a distance of about six miles from Malodh. It is significant to add that the State authorities of Malerkotla had been forewarned. They had made thorough preparations to teach a lesson to the approaching Kukas. Equally important is the fact that the British authorities had taken no steps to prevent the advance of the Kukas, in spite of prior information. The Malerkotla State had requisitioned a large number of soldiers and policemen from the adjoining States.

On 15th January, 1872 the Kukas began their attack on Malerkotla at a locality known as Chirhimar. This was the special target of the Kukas since most of the butchers lived here. In no time, the army and the police reached there to apprehend the Sikhs, who were now outnumbered by more than 9 to 10 times their own ranks. The State police

²¹ See Parliamentary Paper 356—*East India Kuka Outbreak*, 1872, 1307.

and soldiers were armed with swords and guns. There was a terrific fight and the Kukas who had already determined to lay down their lives fought desperately. Many soldiers of Malerkotla ran away. There were three skirmishes in which the Kukas held their ground and inflicted heavy losses upon their enemies.²² They also suffered because of the superior weapons of their opponents. Seven of them were killed and two were injured. Eight were killed in the State forces, and four received injuries. The Malerkotla official who had ordered the slaughter of an ox before the very eyes of a Kuka, Gurmukh Singh, was also killed.

When the State forces had left the field, the Kukas proceeded towards the outskirts of the city taking their injured with them. They were followed by a brave Pathan Samund Khan who had reached late for the first skirmishes. When he heard about the bravery of the Kukas, he took with him a number of Pathan followers and overtook the Kukas at a distance of about 6 miles from Malerkotla. He challenged the Kukas to stop, and asked for Hira Singh who was riding his own horse. Hira Singh at once confronted the Pathan and with amazing courage invited the proud Pathan to make his attack in the first instance. He took the flashing attack on his left arm which was cut off from the wrist. Thereafter, Hira Singh attacked, and in a moment, the head of Samund Khan was rolling in dust.²³ Hira Singh lost one hand in this duel. The other Pathans ran away.

Before being arrested, Hira Singh addressed the following words to his followers:

"I have completed the work for which I had been ordered by Guru Tegh Bahadur. I do not want to do anything

²² Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 161.

²³ The real heroism of Hira Singh can also be judged from the fact that after killing Samund Khan, he appreciated his bravery. He enquired about his sons and caused his sons to be brought before him. Placing his hand on their heads he expressed his desire that they should be properly looked after since they were the offshoots of a brave man (version of a Namdhari writer).

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more. I am now waiting for the consequences. I do not want that anybody who is innocent should suffer with me. Therefore, those who want to go should depart at once. But those who want to offer themselves for martyrdom should remain here."²⁴

Some of the Kukas left, but most of them agreed to offer their lives. They were 68 in number. They allowed themselves to be arrested. The Naib Nazim of Patiala put them in the Amargarh fort. Finally, they were handed over to Mr. Cowen who had reached Malerkotla on 16th January 1872. Many of these prisoners had injuries.

It is worthy of note that since 13 January, 1872 the authorities were made fully aware of the intentions of the Kukas by Fazl Hussain and by Guru Ram Singh himself, through his special messenger. The Government kept a complete track of the movements of the Kukas, and even the higher authorities were kept informed of these developments. On 15th January, 1872 the Government of Panjab sent the following telegram of D. C. Ludhiana, to the Home Secretary, Calcutta:

"200 Kookas attacked Malodh fort last night. Wounded Badan Singh and killed two men. One Kooka killed and two captured. I go out at once. The crime shows great boldness on the part of Kookas."²⁵

Yet, it is surprising that no worthwhile measure was adopted to avert the impending clash. The reasons are obvious. The English authorities in the Panjab were not prepared to deprive themselves of a solid opportunity.

Mr. Cowen, who had reached Malerkotla on 16th January, wanted to teach a lesson to the Kukas. All the Kuka prisoners were brought to the Parade Ground. At 7 o'clock, on 17th January, 1872, 49 of them were blown away before guns, and one was cut to pieces when attacking the Deputy Commissioner. It seems Mr. Cowen had already decided upon this course of action on the very day

²⁴ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 163.

²⁵ Cowen. *Vide* Parliamentary Paper No. 356 of 1872, Vol. 45, p. 645.

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of his arrival, because on 16th January he addressed the following words to the Commissioner of Ambala Division at 7.30 p. m.:

"I am sensible of the great responsibility I incur; but I am satisfied that I act for the best, and that incipient insurrection must be stamped out at once."²⁶

Mr. Forsyth, the Commissioner of Ambala, wrote back to him not to execute the prisoners before he arrived. This letter reached him when 7 of the prisoners were already standing before the guns. He ignored the official letter from Mr. Forsyth, asking him to proceed according to the law. He blew them off. Mr. Cowen records it in the following words:

"I put the note in my pocket and thought no more of it."²⁷

Mr. Cowen also remarks about the conduct of the Kukas in the following words:

"The conduct of these prisoners was most defiant and unruly; they poured forth the most abusive language towards the Government and the chiefs of the native States . . . Their religion required them to slay the killers of cows . . . One man made a furious attack on me, seizing me by the beard."²⁸

Side by side with these executions, the Government of the Panjab moved their military units. They feared that Ludhiana might be attacked by the Kukas. The First Gurkha and a wing of the 72 Regiment, as well as a Mule Battery were sent to Khanna. A half battery of Royal Artillery, 12th Bengal Cavalry and 3 companies of 54th Foot from Jullundur were sent to Ludhiana for the protection of the city.²⁹

²⁶ *Vide ibid.*, 11.

²⁷ *Vide* letter No. 857 dt. 30th April, 1872, from the Government of India to the Government of Panjab, para 18 of Home-Judicial Progs. 112-132 of June 1872.

²⁸ *Vide* Parliamentary Paper 356 of 1872, Vol. 45, 645.

²⁹ *ibid.*

Events Leading to the Arrest of Guru Ram Singh

Next day, Mr. Forsyth also reached Malerkotla. A mock trial was held to decide the fate of the remaining prisoners. The following prisoners were put on trial:

1. Abbel Singh of vill. Balian (Patiala).
2. Roor Singh of Mulu Majra " (Patiala)
3. Kaisra Singh of Gillan (Nabha).
4. Saiwa Singh of Rubbon (Ludhiana).
5. Anoop Singh of Sakrnde (Patiala).
6. Sobha Singh of Rubbon Distt, Ludhiana.
7. Warriam Singh of Chuna Bahadur Singh (Ludhiana).
8. Sham Singh of Jogah (Patiala).
9. Heera Singh of Pitho Ke (Nabha).
10. Bhagat Singh of Kanjhla (Patiala).
11. Hakim Singh of Jhubbal (Amritsar).
12. Warriam Singh of Mehraj (Ferozepur).
13. Sobha Singh of Bhaddal (Nabha).
14. Soojan Singh of Rubbon (Ludhiana).
15. Bela Singh of " "
16. Jowahir Singh of Balean (Patiala).

The prisoners were closely questioned. Accused No. 3, Kaisra Singh uttered the following words:

"God put it into my heart to go with them. No Suba spoke to us. I sat near where Hira Singh and Lehna Singh were. They did not advise me to join them in the enterprise.... We came to Kotla by God's orders to kill the slaughterers of kine."³⁰

Accused No.2 said:

"God told me."

Accused No. 10 said:

"Guru Ram Singh came and told us not to make disturbance there."³¹

Mr. Cowen assumed the role of the Committing Officer and recorded:

"They have committed an act of open rebellion, and

³⁰ *Ibid.* ³¹ *Ibid.*

KUKAS

deserve the severest penalty of the law. I commit the accused for punishment to the Commissioner and Agent for the Patiala State" (18-1-1872).³²

Mr. Forsyth recorded:

"I concur with the Committing Officer and confirm the sentence of death against all to be carried into immediate execution."³³

In this way, 16 more Kuka prisoners were blown with guns. This was the drop-scene of English justice in the Panjab. One of the Kukas, Warriam Singh, was short-statured and could not reach up to the mouth of the cannon. The authorities wanted to set him free. He brought a few bricks and stood thereon in order to join the ranks of martyrs. He was also blown off.

VERSION IN KUKA LITERATURE

The famous Kuka writer, Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, describes the execution of the Kukas by Mr. Cowen in the following manner:

The day of 17th January was fateful in the destiny of Kuka warriors. They were taken to a field near village Jamalpur. There, on one side, the Kukas were made to stand in a line, and on the opposite side there were the Government Rasalahs and armies, and their leaders. Nine guns were fixed at the spot as ordered by Mr. Cowen. According to Government records these guns had been sent by the Maharajas of Patiala, Nabha and Jind. Cowen did not give the Kuka prisoners any opportunity to say anything in their defence. He issued the orders for blowing off the prisoners with guns, although he had no such authority from the Commissioner of Ambala. Rather, he had been ordered not to do so till the Commissioner reached there. The patriotic Kukas only smiled contemptuously at the sight of the cannon. There were hundreds of people who had gathered to see the fun, but they were deeply impressed

³² *Vide ibid.*

³³ T. D. Forsyth, Commissioner and Supdt. and *ex-officio* Agent to the Lt.-Governor, Panjab-Patiala, 18th January, 1872.

Events Leading to the Arrest of Guru Ram Singh

by the fearlessness of the prisoners. Cowen was sitting by the side of his wife. It is wrongly written in the Government records that Kukas *were tied to the mouths* of guns, and were blown off.

The whole incident was witnessed by two brave Sikh ladies Ind Kaur and Khem Kaur who had been members of the Kuka party throughout, and who were released by Cowen much against their own wishes, since they also sought martyrdom. They narrated the whole incident to the other Kukas after their release. According to these two ladies, the Kuka prisoners refused to be tied to the guns. They rather struggled to obtain the first opportunity to face the cannon. They were ordered to stand with their backs towards the guns, but they insisted on being blown off while facing death. Since they were brave Sikhs they wanted to have the cannon-balls upon their chests.

It appeared at that time that the lovers of their Motherland and the protectors of the cows were going forward to offer their sacrifice in order to remove the chains of slavery.

When Cowen ordered 7 Mastanas (Kukas in frenzy) to be brought before the guns, Hira Singh and Lehna Singh were in the first batch. The gunner tried three times to discharge the guns but the guns did not go off. At this, Sardar Hira Singh addressed the following words to Cowen:

“Cowen! I wanted to see the power of your orders. Now see the order of my Satguru. Try the guns again.”

Again the gunner fired, and the bodies of the 7 martyrs were blown to bits. Batch by batch, sons of brave mothers came forward, raising slogans and singing songs. Forty-nine became martyrs. When the only son of Mata Khem Kaur was put before the gun, he was a mere boy of 12 years. Mrs. Cowen was moved to see his innocent face; she recommended pardon for him. Cowen said:

“He can be pardoned if he is prepared to say that he is not the Sikh of his Satguru Ram Singh.”

At this, the boy was provoked and he caught hold of the beard of Mr. Cowen. He did not release it till he was cut to pieces by other soldiers. Inder Kaur and Khem Kaur insisted that they should also be blown with guns but they were only handed over to the Commanding Officer of the Patiala Forces, who released them a few miles inside the Patiala State.³⁴

After this, the authorities indulged in widespread arrests of the Kukas and their leaders. On 17th January, 1872 Cowen sent the following telegram to the Home Secretary, Calcutta:

"Tranquillity restored. About 100 Kookas killed, wounded or captured. Patiala, Nabha and Jind giving active assistance."³⁵

Even Guru Ram Singh, and most of his prominent Subas were arrested, although we have the following telegram dated. 19th January 1872 from the Government of the Panjab to the Home Secretary, Calcutta:

"No direct evidence against Ram Singh in this case sufficient to put him on his trial."³⁶

In giving this information, the Panjab Government was quoting their Commissioner of Ambala. In spite of that, Guru Ram Singh as well as his following Subas were not only arrested but exiled:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Rur Singh | 6. Jawahar Singh |
| 2. Mulluk Singh | 7. Lukka Singh |
| 3. Pahara Singh | 8. Brahma Singh |
| 4. Hukma Singh | 9. Sahib Singh |
| 5. Man Singh | 10. Kahan Singh |

THE LAST JOURNEY

The departure of Guru Ram Singh is described very touchingly by the Namdhari writer Sant Nidhan Singh Alam in the following words:

³⁴ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 166-170.

³⁵ Parliamentary Paper No. 356, Vol. 45, 645.

³⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 7-20 of February 1872.

Events Leading to the Arrest of Guru Ram Singh

"Col. Baile started from Ludhiana for the arrest of Sat Guru Ram Singh. At Sahnewal he learnt that D.S.P. Gulab Singh had already reached Bhaini Sahib with a police party. The Colonel waited for the party at Sahnewal. Gulab Singh, from the borders of Bhaini, sent a message to Guru Ram Singh that the Government wanted him at Ludhiana. Guru Ram Singh remarked: 'The time I anticipated has come.' A few days before, Mai Karmo had given to the Guru a black blanket. Then the Guru remarked: 'Karmo, you have brought the equipment of my exile.' Now the Guru covered his body with the same blanket, and also covered his head with a black piece. His disciples asked for the mode of conveyance. The Guru said: 'Today get ready a bullock-cart for me.'

"The carriage was stationed outside the temple (Gurudwara) of Bhaini. Accursed was the moment when the personality who was responsible for teaching the first lesson of liberty to the whole of India, was being taken away. The Guru knew the consequences beforehand, the price of his mission, and the paths of liberty which would be illumined by his sacrifice. That moment of exile can be compared with the moment of Lord Rama's exile in the ancient times. The only difference was, Lord Rama was exiled for 14 years, whereas the revolutionary Ram of this Kal-yuga was being sent into exile for an indefinite period.

"The eyes of Darshan-seekers were aswim with tears. Father Jassa Singh spoke: . . . 'Maharaj, you had left me in early ages like this; now you are doing again.' After this he broke down in tears. To the grieving younger brother Guru Ram Singh said: 'Do not worry. Price has to be paid for everything. Now I am going forward to pay the price of that thing without which my country and my dear Panjab would always remain in chain.' The brother offered to go in exile in place of the Guru, but Guru Ram Singh did not agree. The driver, Bhai Gurdit Singh of Moroun (Jullundur) was ordered to proceed. The final slogan of Sat-Sri-Akal was raised by the Guru and Bhaini was left behind."³⁷

³⁷ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 171-175.

CHAPTER VIII

BLOWING FROM GUN—AN ACT OF MERCY

Blowing from Gun is an Impressive and Merciful Manner of Execution.

Lt.—Governor of the Panjab
(1872)

To Apply such Term as 'Merciful' to such Punishment is a Strange Misuse of Language Repugnant to Humanity and a Punishment Unfit to be Inflicted by Civilised Men.

Lord Napier (1872)
A Member of Governor-General's Council

The Prisoners were absolutely Helpless. A Larger Proportion of Them were badly Wounded Under These Circumstances their Illegal and Indiscriminate Execution was a Measure for which there was no Excuse.

Government of India
(Lord Northbrook 1872)

THE LT.-GOVERNOR of the Panjab recorded the following words about the action of Mr. Cowen and Mr. Forsyth:

"Blowing from a gun is an impressive and merciful manner of execution, well calculated to strike terror into the bystanders."¹

But the Government of India was not happy about the mode of execution, and the alarming way in which the above two officers of Panjab had acted. This matter was discussed in the Governor-General's Council. Lord Napier commented on the views of the Lt.-Governor in the following words:

"To apply such term as 'merciful' to such a punishment is a strange misuse of language."

He called it

¹ *Vide Home-Judicial Progs.* 208-11 of July, 1872.

Blowing from Gun—An Act of Mercy

“repugnant to humanity and a punishment unfit to be inflicted by civilised men.”²

The newspapers in the Panjab were completely under the threat of the Governor, whereas some of the Muslim papers criticised the Kukas by way of their flattery to their imperial masters.³ Comments of the Bengal newspapers are not available. But the process of dealing with the Kuka prisoners in such an atrocious manner was reported in *The Times* of the 5th of February 1872, upon which a Member of the British Parliament Mr. Haviland Burke asked the Under Secretary of State the following questions:

- (i) Whether as reported in *The Times* of 5th, 50 Kookas were blown from guns by Mr. Cowen;
- (ii) Whether Mr. Forsyth, Chief Commissioner of Ambala, caused 16 more executed in the same manner;
- (iii) Was there any court or tribunal appointed in the trial of these 66 men; and
- (iv) What was the finding of the Court?

These questions put the Secretary of State in a very tight corner. Mr. Grant Duff gave the following reply:

“My reply, I deeply regret to say, is in the affirmative.”

He also mentioned that the Governor-General of India had telegraphed to the Lt.-Governor of the Punjab on 19th January, 1872 the following message:

“Stop any summary execution of Kookas without your express orders.”⁴

² *Vide ibid.*

³ The Panjabi-Akhbar (weekly), edited by Mohd. Azim, found fault with the Government of India for punishing Mr. Forsyth. He called upon the chiefs and nobles of the province to uphold the cause of Mr. Forsyth by representing to the Government. He dwelt on the brilliant services of Forsyth. *Vide*, Confidential Report of the Native Newspapers in the Panjab, 25-5-1872.

⁴ See Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Session 1872, 29-2-1872, 1157-8.

The Members of the British Parliament were not satisfied, and they were still keen to know whether any trial was held before the execution of the Kukas. After close questioning, the Under Secretary of State, Mr. Grant Duff, gave the following categorical answer:

"So far as we are aware, there was no trial of any sort by Mr. Cowen. He executed without trial."⁵

It is interesting to note from the above questions and answers that the summary execution of Kukas was stopped in the Panjab only due to the telegram of the Government of India to the Lt.-Governor. It is quite probable if this telegram of 19th January, 1872 had not been sent, many more Kukas would have suffered the same fate.

The Government of India did not inform the Secretary of State about these incidents till the matter was raised in some of the newspapers in India and abroad, particularly in the *Times*. It was only two days after the news being flashed in the columns of the *Times* that the Government of India sent the following telegram dated the 7th February, 1872 to the Secretary of State:

"Deputy Commissioner on 17th without formal trial or needful sanction of Commissioner, illegally blew away 49 from guns. Commissioner arrived next day early. Tried legally and hanged 16 others. Government of India wholly disapproved these wholesale executions which seemed quite unjustifiable and has suspended D. C. pending further enquiry. Everything now quiet."⁶

It is clearly evident from the above telegram that even the Government of India had been kept in the dark about the mode of execution of Kuka prisoners by Forsyth. This is why the word 'hanged' appears in the telegram. For a long time the Government of India did not know that Forsyth had also used the same uncivilised method of dealing with Kuka prisoners. As soon as they came to know

⁵ *Vide, ibid.*

⁶ *Vide Home-Judicial Progs.* 106 of June, 1872.

about this, they called upon the Panjab Government to explain “why this important fact was not reported to the Government of India.”⁷

The Lt.-Governor of the Panjab, Mr. Forsyth and Mr. Cowen had, perhaps, anticipated from the beginning that the Government of India would not approve of their conduct concerning the mode of punishment administered in the case of the Kukas. This is why they put forth a large number of arguments in order to strengthen their case. The Kuka danger was presented in the most damaging manner. As early as 16th January 1872, the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab had telegraphed to the Viceroy at 11-50 a.m. the following words:

“Country not safe whilst leaders at large. I have, therefore, authorised Forsyth to effect capture of Ram Singh and principal Subas.”⁸

A large number of deportations followed after this telegram. The headmen of all the villages were strictly instructed to keep a watch on the movements of the Kukas. Nobody was permitted to carry any weapons, and the Arms Act was strictly enforced. A complete system of surveillance and report was introduced, so much so that even the slightest movement of the Kukas could not escape Government eyes. The Lt.-Governor and his subordinates were able to get away with such widespread arrests and sweeping measures. But it proved difficult to justify the blowing of the Kukas with guns. The Lt.-Governor and his officers quoted the example of 1857 when such summary punishments had been resorted to. They also referred to the penal code practised in the States where the methods of punishment followed in British India may not be strictly adhered to. But the Government of India refused to be swayed by such arguments.

Report of the Maharaja of Patiala

A main effort in this direction was also made by the

⁷ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 112-132 of June 1872.

⁸ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 55-71 of 20th January 1872.

Maharaja of Patiala. His main aim was to safeguard the interests of Forsyth. Many other Sardars and prominent leaders were also moved likewise to represent to the Government of India about the justice of steps taken by Mr. Forsyth and Cowen. The letter of the Maharaja of Patiala recalled the danger from the Kuka movement in order to justify the role of Mr. Forsyth. His letter may be quoted below:

Letter dated Patiala, 12th February 1872

From

HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA OF PATIALA

To

L. H. GRIFFIN, *Officiating Secretary to the Government of the Panjab.*

"In reply to a telegram from you, I promised in my letter dated 2nd ultimo to make enquiries as requested by His Honour the Lieut.-Governor, and communicate to you, if possible, the real cause of the Kooka outbreak.

"2. I, therefore, write for His Honour's information that from many proofs it is certain that Ram Singh's real motive and ambition was to reign and acquire dominions, and he deceitfully implanted this capricious notion in the minds of his ignorant and superstitious followers, that their creed was to predominate, and that everywhere the Government of the country will be very soon in their hands; and as they had the fullest belief of this absurdity; he never failed to excite their minds and keep them in agitation and earnest desire to attain that object; and as the number of his disciples (full of bigotry and blind zeal of their faith; cared little or nothing for their lives and property in securing the pleasure and satisfaction of their Satguru in the furtherance of his motives), had now increased to enormity and vastness, he therefore had a sanguine hope of success and excited them to view with utmost hatred and horror the act of cow-killing.

"3. *The Act of Cow Killing.* In exciting this prejudice

his motive was (as, under the religious pretext, the 'cart-ridge' prejudice subverted and put into commotion the whole of India in 1857) that by means of this ignitable match he may stir up and excite the feelings of the Hindu community (including nobility, gentry and the troops) to sympathise and stand up in support of this common cause of hatred against the rulers of the country, anticipating a result from this confusion that in every class and grade of the community he would be held with respect and awe, and thus establish a powerful sway over them, of which he was long in earnest. Had not this appalling punishment been inflicted so promptly upon the insurgents as had been the case, and had not Ram Singh been instantly deported with his Subas from his home, there was no hope of the disturbance being quelled so soon; and no doubt there would have been an endless waste of money and life before full tranquillity and confidence would have been restored.

"4. Had Kookas even a meagre success in their attacks at Malerkotla and Malodh, the whole sect would have sprung like fiends from all sides who were eagerly watching the result of these pantomime attacks.

"5. The above is a brief account of my enquiries in the matter which have been recorded after careful observation.

"6. There is one thing which I think should be brought to your notice. I have learnt from newspapers that the Government has expressed its disapprobation at the manner of the punishment awarded to the insurgents by the local authorities. I believe, in the Native public, the object of the Government will be misunderstood and more particularly by the people of this benighted sect, who shall no doubt attribute it to some supernatural power of their Satguru. I am afraid this would in great measure, tend to frustrate and invalidate the active and efficient measures adopted by the British authorities and the native chiefs in the coercion and eradication of the evil which has been so promptly and adequately nipped in the bud, before bringing forth any blossoms of further evil, or would rather

tend to render them less efficacious and to make them look light and unimportant. I am of the opinion that misconstruction of the intention of Government by the public is always fraught with unpleasant consequences and I deem it right to inform you of the views I take on the subject.

"Trusting that his Honour and Yourself are in the perfect enjoyment of health."⁹

The above letter of Maharaja of Patiala was no doubt a remarkable performance to enable the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab to save his position, and that of his two officers who were mainly responsible for blowing off the Kukas. A number of conclusions may be deduced from the contents of the letter written by the Maharaja of Patiala. Firstly, the Maharaja felt that Guru Ram Singh wanted to establish a kingdom. He and his followers had no genuine love for the cow; cow-protection was a mere pretext. Secondly, the Maharaja felt that the mode of punishment resorted to by Mr. Cowen and Mr. Forsyth was absolutely correct in view of the great danger. Thirdly, it seems, the Maharaja was greatly concerned about the fate of Mr. Cowen and Mr. Forsyth whom he wanted to save from the consequences of their action. Fourthly, the Maharaja did not regard Malerkotla and Malodh as mere incidents. These attacks were preliminaries to a great upheaval. In conclusion, we may add that a better performance could not be expected from the descendant of a royal house who had always sided with the Imperialists and whose contribution towards the submergence of the Lahore State had been considerable. It is very important to note that in the blowing up of the Kukas the State of Patiala was an equal party along with Mr. Cowen. This fact is mentioned even in the letter quoted above. This was not the only command performance. Harnam Singh Ahluwalia, Vikram Singh Ahluwalia, Suchet Singh Ahluwalia, Golak Nath (missionary), and hundreds of other "yes-men" in the imperial fold were bandied together, through the agency of a Christian missionary, to send a representation to the Government of the

⁹ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 107-111 of June 1872.

Panjab in favour of Cowen and Forsyth. They held "Forsyth was an experienced officer who extinguished this spark before it became a blaze.... We are grateful to this officer etc. etc...."

Government of India Punishes Cowen and Forsyth

In spite of all the attempts by the Maharaja of Patiala, the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab, and other "reptile species" who sent representations to justify the conduct of the British officials, the Government of India did not change its opinion. For this, credit and appreciation would always be due to the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, and some Members of his Council. In their letter No. 857 dated the 30th of April, 1872 they wrote the following lines to the Government of the Panjab:

"Para 13: His Excellency in Council cannot consent to be forced by the crime of a few fanatics into the sanction of acts repugnant to the whole spirit of British rule. The British Government is strong enough to keep order and suppress crime and there is no occasion for indiscriminate severity, nor in any case could the exercise of such severity be a source of strength."¹⁰

In para 15, the Government of India pointed out to the Lt.-Governor of the Punjab:

"The prisoners were absolutely helpless. A large proportion of them were badly wounded Under these circumstances their illegal and indiscriminate execution was a measure for which there was no excuse."¹¹

In paras 18 and 20 the Government of India reminded the Panjab authorities how Cowen had ignored the note sent by Forsyth, advising him not to deviate from the legal path. At that time, 6 or 7 prisoners were before the guns when the official communication of Forsyth reached him. Still, he blew them off. In the above circumstances, the Government of India said in para 23:

¹⁰ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 112-132 of June 1872. ¹¹ *Ibid*.

"His Excellency in Council is compelled to direct that Mr. Cowen be removed from the service."¹²

Likewise the Government of India censured Mr. Forsyth, about whom the following views were recorded in para 25:

"His proceedings showed a want of that merciful discrimination which ought in all such cases to be characteristic of the British Administration of Justice."¹³

Mr. Forsyth was transferred from the Panjab to Rajasthan, and he was debarred by the Government of India from holding any political assignment in future.

The Secretary of State was duly informed by the Government of India in regard to their decisions in respect of Mr. Cowen and Mr. Forsyth, and the Secretary of State approved this in his letter No. 32, dated 18th July, 1872.¹⁴

Representation by T. D. Forsyth

On 6th July, 1872 Mr. Forsyth represented against his censure by the Government of India. He wrote a detailed letter in regard to the danger posed by the Kukas. His letter may be reproduced below:

"On the third May 1872, without any previous warning ... I found myself publicly censured, removed from appointment, and proscribed from all future political employ by the Government of India for the share which I took in disposing of the Kooka disturbances in January last."¹⁵

In para 6 of his letter Forsyth referred to the ambitions and the methods of the Kukas in the following words:

"Not only was the whole Panjab apportioned into about 70 Soobas or provinces through which the Guru's lieu-

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Vide Home-Judicial Progs.* 246 of August 1872.

¹⁵ *Vide Home-Judicial Progs.* 212-220 of July, 1872.

tenants actively itinerated, preaching the speedy restoration of the Khalsa rule, and enlisting all the thews and sinews of the Sikh race, but emissaries were sent to Kashmir, Kabul and Nepal. The secret postal arrangements were perfect, so that the orders of the Guru reached with astonishing rapidity, the remotest corner of the province, and beyond it wherever Kookas were to be found in our army or in foreign states, and Ram Singh knew that these orders would be obeyed.”¹⁶

Para 8: “The fact is in evidence before the Government that though the Kookas were called together to consult, the more ambitious and impatient Subas, such as Lehna Singh and Hira Singh, who had been to Delhi and found all our troops occupied, the Maharaja of Patiala also there and Ambala vacant, were ‘all for open war’, and thus precipitated events for which Ram Singh was not fully prepared. Whilst he hesitated how to take advantage of the attack on Malodh and Malerkotla, he was seized and deported to Allahabad.”¹⁷

Mr. Forsyth referred to the words of the Government of India in censuring him:

“He has in no small degree identified himself with the errors committed by Mr. Cowen. ... and he acted eventually in a manner inconsistent with the recognised policy of the Government of India.”¹⁸

In the end Mr. Forsyth remarked in para 34:

“When the whole correspondence is published it will be seen that this gang openly declared that they were to be joined by others, that they were to capture the States of Nabha, Jind and Patiala, that some of their brethren had gone to raise the Kooka standards at Amritsar.”¹⁹

¹⁶ *Vide ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

It is clear from the views expressed by Forsyth that he was presenting the Kuka danger in order to defend the excessive use of power in which he had himself indulged. He was just like a drowning man making desperate efforts. Mr. Forsyth, as well as the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab had enlisted the support of the Maharaja of Patiala, and various other Christians and loyal noblemen of the Panjab to malign the Kukas in their final bid to save the situation for themselves. It goes to the great credit of the Government of India, that with great prudence and understanding they were able to see through the game. This is why the censure was not withdrawn in respect of Mr. Forsyth. Mr. Cowen paid with his job as well.

The condition of Mr. Cowen was rather worse. His degradation was real. He felt like a fallen leaf. For a time, he was absolutely uncertain even about his pension, which the Government of India recommended for him to the Secretary of State, *vide* their letter No. 151A of 1872, Finance Department. The pension was approved by the Secretary of State *vide* No. Judicial 32 of 18th July, 1872. But, from the 18th January to the 18th of July, 1872 Mr. Cowen was in great difficulty. Even his wife died due to the anxieties that befell her in the wake of his dismissal. Mr. Cowen was referred to in the Government correspondence as 'this unfortunate man'. He himself wrote a very pathetic letter to the authorities about the way his children had been suffering, and he himself had undergone the period of trial. He referred to his wife's death in a letter with black borders. The letter may be reproduced below in part:

Letter Mussoorie 19-6-1872

From Cowen to E. C. Bayley, C.S.S.

"It was my intention to have proceeded to Simla but for the dangerous illness of my wife which terminated fatally, an illness due to solely as the medical men who attended her assure me to mutual anxiety and distress at my dismissal...."²⁰

²⁰ *Vide* Home-Judicial-Progs 246 of August 1872.

Mussoorie 19th June 1872

Dear Sir

In your demi Official note
of the 20th May you were good
enough to inform me that
you would send a reply to my
letter of the 13th May. "As soon
as possible after the arrival of
Mr. Isabella at Simla".

It was my intention to
have proceeded to Simla,
but the dangerous illness of
my Wife soon terminated
for the present, an illness now settling.

Letter from Mr. Cowen. Vide Home-Judicial Progs. 246 of August 1872.
(Courtesy: National Archives of India)

the 10-11th men who attended her arrival me,
to mental anxiety and
distress at my dismissal has
prevented me from carrying
out the intention. I do not
entrust my affection on your
kind words but view of celebrity
your sympathy. My object
in troubling you is to enquire
if any reply has been received
from England in the application
made for a pension on my
behalf. I am prevented
for a time from working
as a Pleader, as I must remain
here to take charge of my
4 children & suddenly deprived
of a mother and sister I

9
am becoming seriously embarrassed.
If a pension is granted to me,
I purpose leaving India. I pray
you therefore if my reply has
been received from England
to be so good as to telegraph
and enquire if I am to get
a pension remain

Yours faithfully
L. Cowan

2 E. C. Bayly Esq. Es.



In conclusion, a few things deserve special notice. The conduct of the Government of India in regard to the actions of Forsyth and Cowen was worthy of its position. It deserves appreciation from all impartial observers. The attitude of the Viceroy vindicated British sense of justice in its true perspective. The Government of India even suggested to the Panjab Government that Guru Ram Singh and the other Subas should be properly tried in Courts of Law.²¹ This attitude also deserves appreciation. It is, however, unfortunate that the paramount power or the Viceroy did not enforce their ideas in regard to this with as much firmness as they had done in regard to the punishment of the two erring officers. They failed to roll back the tide of injustice and oppression towards the Kukas. Guru Ram Singh was exiled. However, it is important to quote one of the British Officers in Ludhiana in this respect. Capt. Menzies wrote from that station a demi-official letter dated 18th January, 1872 in which he said:

"I myself was against Ram Singh being deported, but Mr. Forsyth said he must send him off before he went out to Malerkotla."²²

It seems to be a strange paradox that when the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab had already admitted that the responsibility could not be fixed on Guru Ram Singh for what happened at Malodh and Malerkotla, when officers like Capt. Menzies were against such deportation, when the Government of India stood for a judicial trial rather than use of Regulation (iii) of 1818 against the Kukas, and finally, when the Government actually punished Mr. Forsyth and Cowen—the wrong course of deporting the Namdhari Guru and his principal Subas remained unreversed. It can, therefore, be concluded that, much against their own wishes, the Government of India swam with the official stream which flowed from the Panjab. This incon-

²¹ *Vide* Letter No. 60 dt. 27-12-1872—Home-Judicial Progs. 279-365 of June 1874.

²² *Vide* Parliamentary Paper No. 356 of 1872.

sistency in the attitude of the Government of India undid the good impression created by it by punishing those two officers. The lives and the health of a large number of innocent people were endangered and the Namdhari Guru suffered in exile for more than 14 years. It makes a sad commentary on the sense of justice of the British authority in the Centre.

In the Punjab, the cycle of oppression continued. The touts of the Imperialists gathered around the Government to present exaggerated reports of Kuka reaction. Civil officers, police agents and *cis-Sutlej* Chieftains combined to spread new rumours of a Kuka outbreak in the month of April, 1872. In their confidential letter No. 391, Lahore, dated the 2nd April, 1872 the Government of the Panjab wrote to the Government of India (Foreign Department) that the Kukas were meditating another uprising at some convenient time such as Holi or Baisakhi. These were to take place at Sialkot, Gujranwala, Amritsar, Anandpur and *cis-Sutlej* States.²³

In para 4 of their letter the Government of the Panjab mentioned the precautions taken in order to forestall the intentions of the Kukas. The para may be quoted in full:

"The principal leaders of the Kooka sect have been deported from the province. All those of influence who remain are under surveillance, and their movements are carefully watched. The headmen of rural circles (Zaildars) and the headmen of villages have been enjoined to report under penalty of deprivation of office or other punishments, the movements of all Kookas within their villages or circles. The assembly of more than five Kookas has been forbidden throughout the province. The carrying in public places, of axes, iron-bound sticks and other weapons, which if not coming under the provisions of Arms Act, are still formidable in the event of riot, has been strictly prohibited. The complete system of surveillance and report has been establish-

²³ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 11 of June 1872.

ed with reference to the whole sect and the Lieut. Governor believes that no movement of the smallest importance can possibly take place without the Government being instantly aware of the same.”²⁴

This shows that the Panjab Government had adopted the most stringent measures, and the Kukas were being treated as worse than outcastes and criminals. In January 1872, the apartments of the Namdhari Guru at Bhaini Sahib had been searched by Col. Bailie for arms. This search continued for two days. All the money, pieces of valuable cloth, and shawls, and items of jewellery, were confiscated. The houses were locked and a police party of twenty under Deputy Inspector Umrao Ali was stationed there. Except Baba Jassa Singh, father of Guru Ram Singh, Guru Hari Singh (brother), Bibi Nanda (daughter) and a few other attendants, most of the Sikhs were expelled from the Kuka headquarters. The Panjab Government again wrote to the Deputy Commissioner to make thorough searches in the houses of Guru Ram Singh for money and arms. Cowen sent Mr. Jackson (A.S.P.). He reached Bhaini Sahib and many places in the houses of the Guru were dug up to considerable depths.

Letters of thanks were sent to the rulers of Jind, Nabha and Patiala for their ignominious part in the whole affair.²⁵ Niaz Ali, the Naib Nazim of Patiala was given a reward of Rs. 1,000.²⁶ This is all that the camp followers got. And for the Kukas, a new form of sustained persecution and exile was opened for a period of nearly 75 years.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Kuka outbreak, 36-40 (Parliamentary Paper).

²⁶ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 182.

CHAPTER IX

NAMDHARI MOVEMENT AND ITS CONTACT WITH KASHMIR AND NEPAL

The Attempt of Ram Singh to Get a Party of His Followers under Arms in Kashmir, also a Similar Move in Nepal, Goes far to Show that he is Working Outside the Sphere of a Guru or a Religious Leader.

Col. MacAndrew

13 January 1871

During Their Stay They (Kookas) Were Much Pampered and Petted. Presents were Frequently Bestowed upon Them . . . And a Permanent Place was assigned to any who Liked to go to Durbar . . .

Charles Girdlestone

Srinagar, 5 October 1871

THE NAMDHARIS showed great initiative and drive in extending their activities to Kashmir, Nepal and Central Asia. Their activity in Kashmir was more or less confined to entering the ranks of the regiments of the Maharaja. This was perhaps to escape from the clutches of the English as well as to get military training. It was also to provide useful employment to the Kukas in the Namdhari fold. Since they were all sturdy Jats, martial in spirit, and warlike by tradition, this occupation of a soldier suited them well. Their recruitment in the armies of Kashmir and Nepal may be summed up below.

KASHMIR

In Kashmir, the Namdhari influence was extended about the years 1868 and 1869. But contacts before these were not totally missing. After all Kashmir had formed an important province of the sovereign State of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After the annexation of the Panjab the Sikhs

continued to be the ruling party there. In the second half of the 19th century, the Maharaja of Kashmir began to feel the impact of British imperialism and close supervision. He began to develop contacts with the State of Nepal, and with the Russians in Central Asia. His secret agents namely Mansukh, and some others were active with the Russians. This gave a chance to the Namdharis also, to enlist themselves in his armies.

The Namdharis seemed to have developed contacts with one of the anti-British parties in the court of the Maharaja. The story of their recruitment in the army of the Maharaja has been told from different sources. In the year 1869, reports began to reach the Panjab authorities about the recruitment of the Namdharis in the army of the Maharaja. It appears from the confidential letter of the Inspector General of Police, Panjab, that "a Deputy Inspector was sent at the end of 1869 to Jammu to learn particulars and the facts of a Kooka regiment."¹ It was from the above report that the following information was obtained:

"Some six or seven months ago Hira Singh of Ambala District, Tara Singh of Killa, Desa Singh of Amritsar District, Lal Singh of Patiala, Chanda Singh of Amritsar and about 30 other Kookas went to the Maharaja of Kashmir and asked for service. The Maharaja promised to form them into a regiment if they could collect enough men to constitute one; a residence was assigned for them outside the city of Jammu. Recruiting was commenced. At the time of writing the report, there were 150 men although many had left. Hira Singh was commandant and was put on the mission of recruitment. In October 1869, there were 200 to 250 Kookas in the regiment. No uniforms were issued to them but they were drilled with weapons."²

The above report was written on 30th January, 1871.

¹ Letter No. 12 dated Lahore, 30th January 1871, *vide* Progs. 273-284 of August 1872.

² *Ibid.*

As months rolled by, and particularly in the month of October, the Government obtained more information. Charles Girdlestone sent the following report from Srinagar on 5th October, 1871:

"Last year the Maharaja got up two Kooka companies comprising 200 men with the idea of making them a nucleus of a regular Kooka regiment....200 men stayed at Jammu for a little while and were transferred to Srinagar."³

On 7th October, 1871 the Police Department in Gujranwala district furnished the following facts in a confidential report:

"In 1868 Hira Singh, one of Guru Ram Singh's Subas, was sent by the same Guru to meet the Kashmir ruler. The Kashmir ruler ordered him to enlist a regiment of Kookas and also appointed him to command it as a subordinate of Col. Hukma Singh. Hira Singh returned to Guru Ram Singh and obtained his permission to take 175 Kookas to Jammu. These men formed two companies. They were sent to garrison the fort of Naushera in the border area where they remained for a period of three months. After this they were kept for one year in the cantonment of Butmaloo before being removed to Muzaffarabad; from there they were sent to the Kuthai fort and then to Dossutta fort. After this they were suddenly dismissed as soon as the Maharaja heard an Englishman saying that the British Government regarded the Kookas as enemies."⁴

Col. MacAndrew submitted a memorandum on 13th October, 1871 in which he commented on this aspect of Namdhari activity. His comments were as follows:

"The attempt of Ram Singh to get a party of his

³ *Vide* Foreign Dept. Political-A Progs. 39-49 of February 1872.

⁴ Confidential Police Report dated the 7th October 1871, *ibid*.

followers under arms in Kashmir, also a similar move in Nepal, goes far to show that he is working outside the sphere of a Guru or a religious leader.”⁵

It seems from the Government reports that the Kuka leaders namely Kahan Singh and Hira Singh were able to approach the Maharaja through Col. Hukma Singh. In fact, he is said to have introduced these Subas of Guru Ram Singh to the ruler, if the researches made by Girdlestone through two independent sources are to be believed. This happened in 1868, and they were dismissed when Dewan Kirpa Ram, who belonged to the pro-British party represented to the Maharaja that the Kukas should not be kept; they were not true Sikhs. No benefit could be obtained by keeping them in the army. We learn from the report of the same officer that “their hasty removal was due to an adverse remark of a British officer which reached the Maharaja.”⁶

NEPAL

In the seventies of the 19th century the ruler of Nepal was only a nominal head whereas the actual power was wielded by his Prime Minister Rana Jang Bahadur. Ever since their defeat at the hands of the British in the time of Lord Moira, the Gurkhas had professed friendship for the British. They were recruited in the British armies in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Sagauli. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh was ruling in the Panjab, he also formed a number of regiments consisting of the Gurkhas. In fact they were an important part of his *Fauji-Khas*. The Sikh-Nepal contacts developed in these circumstances and some of the Nepal nobles, including Jang Bahadur, had passed some time in the Darbar of Ranjit Singh. From time to time, the rulers of Nepal flirted politically with the fugitives from British India. Rani Jindan was given shelter, and even the British authorities

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 52-53 dated 13th January, 1871.

realised that Nepal would not surrender that prisoner except through war. Many of the soldiers and leaders of the upheaval of 1857 including Nana Sahib, Tantia Tope and Kanwar Singh had taken shelter in Nepal. The Kooka contacts with Nepal are said to have developed in the following manner:

"In 1850 Jang Bahadur declared a war on Tibet. Tibet was defeated. According to a treaty which followed, the Tibetan authorities were made to surrender all the Sikh prisoners of the Lahore Darbar in their captivity. They were surrendered to the Nepal authorities. When they reached Kathmandu they began to train the forces of Rana Jang Bahadur. It was under them that some of the Nepal regiments learnt parade as well as hill fighting. The contacts of other Kooka Sikhs with the Nepal authorities increased when Maharani Jindan stayed in their country."⁷

In 1868, the same Hira Singh who recruited the Kuka soldiers for the regiments in Kashmir also reached Nepal. He was encouraged by Jang Bahadur as the Rana had done in the case of many other anti-British elements. Hira Singh, Kishan Singh, both Namdharis, conveyed to Jang Bahadur various facts of the Namdhari movement. This was followed by the exchange of gifts. Guru Ram Singh is said to have sent a few buffaloes and other animals as desired by the Nepal Ruler, whereas from the Nepal side, 500 rupees, a Tibetan horse, two kukhris, a shawl and a rosary of 108 beads (of Kastur-i-Mrig) were sent through Sahib Singh and Kahn Singh. These were accepted under pressure from Nepal although the Kuka Guru had told his men not to bring any gifts.

The Britishers came to learn about all these movements in the year 1871, and they began to press the Nepal Government to stop the activities of the Namdharis. The British Resident, Col. R. C. Lawrence, sent a detailed confidential

⁷ *Vide* Namdhari Itihas, Nahar Singh, 110-11.

report to the Foreign-Political Department of the Government of India in November 1871. A part of the report may be given below:

"I mentioned the subject casually with Sir Jang Bahadur relating to a party of Kooka Sikhs wandering about the city last winter.

"The Minister admitted knowledge of the Kooka party which had also brought him a present of two buffaloes. He seemed to suggest he required two buffaloes and the Kookas came to avail of this opportunity. He also admitted having several conversations with those Kookas about Guru Ram Singh, their number etc. and he was impressed with the strength and standing they had obtained in the country."⁸

Jang Bahadur also informed the British Resident that the Kooka followers numbered three lakhs and fifteen thousands, all professing implicit faith in their Guru and ready to do his bidding, whether for good or evil.⁹

In para 4 of the same letter No. 15P dated 22nd November, 1871 (Confidential), the British Resident concluded:

"I may safely say that no encouragement was given them."¹⁰

It also appears from the same report that there were about 16 Sikhs in the service of the Rana, all of whom he had dismissed.¹¹ Jang Bahadur also disclosed to the British Resident that these 16 Sikhs were employed in "drilling the soldiers."¹²

CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that extension of Namdhari movement to Kashmir and Nepal was important in the political

⁸ *Vide* Foreign Department, Political—A, Progs. 39-49 of February 1872.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.* ¹² *Ibid.*

sense for the British. It will, however, be too presumptuous to regard this development important from the point of view of the Namdhari Movement or the growth of the struggle for emancipation. So far as Kashmir and Nepal were concerned they were not the least inspired by the noble sentiments of the Namdhari cause. The political history of the ruling dynasty in Kashmir was nothing except betrayal of the Sikh cause. Its very origin stood on foundations of treachery to the national ideals. It could never lend any support to any movement directed against the paramount power. In fact, the recruitment of Kukas by the Maharaja of Kashmir was for him a political game. In the beginning, it was not merely the formation of another regiment as the Maharaja had regiments of Dogras or Battis. Nor was it to provide employment to the Namdhari Sikhs. He was then playing a game. He pampered the Kukas and then threw them out to please his British masters. It is significant to note the following lines of the reports sent by Charles Girdlestone from Srinagar dated 5th October, 1871:

“During their stay they (Kookas) were much pampered and petted. Presents were frequently bestowed upon them irrespective of their pay, and a permanent place was assigned to any who liked to go to Darbar. It was no unknown thing for a party of them (Kookas) to attend the Darbar after the morning parade.”¹³

The same report tells us that the Kukas were suddenly dismissed after the Maharaja had heard an adverse remark from the mouth of a British Officer. The Police report of Jhelum district tells us the following story:

“Several Kookas have been passing through this week—going down country for employment—all discharged by the Maharaja of Kashmir.”¹⁴

It seems the Maharaja of Kashmir had recruited the Kukas with open eyes because it was to give him another

¹³ *Vide* Foreign Dept. Political—A Progs. 39-49 of February 1872.

¹⁴ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 52-53 of 13th January, 1872.

chance of expressing his loyalty or faithfulness to the British. He dismissed them as soon as the English wanted.

Similarly, the Nepal ruler had no sympathy with the Namdhari cause. He was also playing with the simple-minded and patriotic Kukas who were seeking his support. It is interesting to note that immediately after the Malerkotla incident when 49 Kukas were Blown away with guns some of the Nepal Generals came out to support the British cause. We learn from a file of the Foreign-Political Department that General Babbur Jang offered his services to the British on a personal level, and not on behalf of the Nepal Government to help them suppress the Kuka insurrection.¹⁵

Had the Nepal Government ever been interested in the struggle of the Indians for freedom (in the 19th century) it would not have allowed the opportunity of 1857 to slip by.

¹⁵ Foreign Dept. Political—B Progs. 132-133 of February 1872.

CHAPTER X

NAMDHARIS AND THE RUSSIANS IN CENTRAL ASIA

To Talk of Severing Gurcharan Singh's Connections with the Kookas Seems to me useless. He is a Kooka Suba and will Remain so till he Dies, Doing Meanwhile all the Harm He Can do to us."

H. M. Durand
19 January 1881

ON THE 9th of May, 1879 the citizens of Kutta Kurghan, a border city of Russian Turkistan, found in their midst an old man of 75 years with light complexion, aquiline features; large eyes, white beard and moustache; 5 ft. 11 in. tall, a fine and handsome specimen of a Sikh. He was the Namdhari emissary named Gurcharan Singh of Chak Ramdas (Gujranwala) who was carrying a letter written in Gurmukhi. This Namdhari messenger met the Russian Officer, Major-General Ibanov at Samarkand. An Indian merchant trading in Central Asia helped the Russians to translate the Gurmukhi letter into Persian. From Persian it was rendered into Russian. This is how the first contact was made by the Namdharis with the Russians in Central Asia. The Government version is, however, a little different.¹ In accordance with the version in the Foreign-Political Department files:

"On 1st May 1879 Kooka Gurcharan Singh brought a Hindi letter purporting to be from Ram Singh and signed by several others."²

Gurcharan Singh was received with great honour and, according to a secret agent of the British, he received from

¹ In fact both the versions are not without flaws. It is quite likely Gurcharan Singh knew many languages including Persian and Pushto. This is admitted in Government records.

² *Vide* Foreign Dept. Political-Secret Progs. 558-599 of January 1882.

the Russians Rs. 700 in Russian notes and silk *choghas*. A merchant called Jawala was ordered to entertain him.³ The letter which he carried contained greetings from Guru Ram Singh, referred to as "*the Guru of Chaste people*, writing fondly to the Russian Lord." It referred to the predictions of Guru Gobind and Guru Nanak which anticipated the role of Russia in the emancipation of the Panjab. It informed the Russians that there were 3,15,000 Namdhari Sikh fighters who were ready to launch a struggle against the English. It called upon the Russians to come forward to protect the Indians. It said:

"Ram Singh was the spiritual leader of 3,15,000 Kookas, all brave soldiers. The tyrannical British Government had imprisoned him. The British were afraid of losing Punjab to the Kookas. Their sacred prophecies say: 'Russians assisted by Khalsas would expel them'...."⁴

This letter also informed the Russians that the English had made an offer to release Guru Ram Singh by sending three Englishmen from England. But he had refused saying that he wanted to be busy in his prayers, and that another enemy of the English had already appeared.⁵

Major-General Ibanov was greatly impressed with the personality and bearing of Gurcharan Singh as a patriot who wanted to see his country free. The Russians sent the following reply:

"Greetings from Major-General Ibanov to General Ram Singh, and Budh Singh. The letter was duly received from Guru Charan Singh, careful consideration was given to it and the contents were gratifying to know. It is only informative communication but it is desi-

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* (The present Kuka leader refutes the genuineness of the contents of this letter. The figure of 3,15,000 Kukas could not have been given as the Kukas then numbered about 7,00,000.)

⁵ *Ibid.*

able to have details, more fresh news about the affairs and situation in India.

"The prophecy of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Nanak was noted for information. Everything will happen according to the Will of God. The Prophets know best when the hour will strike."⁶

It is quite clear from the secret files of the Government of India that Gurcharan Singh was the most active Namdhari moving between Panjab and Central Asia to persuade the Russians for giving help to the cause of the Sikhs. On 1st October, 1879 he was again honoured by the Russians. Following is the report of a secret agent of the British Government:

"On 1st October 1879 Gurcharan Singh Kooka, Suba of Baba Ram Singh, was given 2,500 Tangas and 7 Choghas and told to return to Punjab and strengthen the friendship between the Russians and the Kookas. He left Balkh and is now at Tash Zurghan."⁷

It is difficult to estimate how many times Gurcharan Singh visited the Russians. He must have made a good number of visits between April 1879 and April 1881. The English grew watchful and cautious. They took a very strong notice of the activities of this Namdhari Suba. In April 1881, Sir Robert Egerton, the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab, began to press the Government of India for the issue of a warrant under Regulation III of 1818. They wrote a confidential letter to the Government of India:

"From a perusal of all facts which have been collected regarding Gurcharan Singh, the Lt.-Governor has arrived at the conclusion that it is not expedient that he should remain at liberty as he will certainly contrive

⁶ Quoted by P. C. Roy, in his article 'Gurcharan Singh's Mission in Central Asia', *Indian Historical Records Commission Proceeding* Vol. XXXIV, Part II, Trivandrum, December 1958.

⁷ Dept. of Foreign-Political Secret Progs. 558-559 of January 1882.

to act in the future as the medium of communication between the Russian authorities in Central Asia and the disaffected Kookas.”⁸

The Lt.-Governor also pointed out:

“He does not consider Gurcharan Singh dangerous as a Kooka but rather as an emissary from Central Asia exciting vain hopes in the minds of the Kooka leaders.”⁹

The Government of India were not willing to agree to the use of Regulation III of 1818. A.C. Lyall, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, recorded:

“It was a process that rather strains the law but the Punjab Magistrates do it whenever they choose.”¹⁰

The Viceroy, Lord Ripon, expressed his agreement with the views expressed by Mr. A. C. Lyall. But another Member of the Governor General’s Council expressed different views, saying:

“To talk of severing Gurcharan Singh’s connections with the Kookas seems to me useless. He is a Kooka Suba and will remain so till he dies, doing meanwhile all the harm he can do to us...”¹¹

In October 1880, the British secret agent Gulab Khan met Gurcharan Singh at Peshawar and intimated to him that he was going to Kutta Karghan. Gurcharan Singh then gave him two letters for the Russian officers which Gulab Khan made over to the British. The letters said even the Burmese had revolted against the English, and that the Shikarpuris were British spies, etc. It was, in fact, through the efforts of Gulab Khan that Gurcharan Singh

⁸ Confidential Letter No. 688 from Secretary to the Punjab Government to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated Lahore, 5th April 1881. *Vide ibid.*

⁹ *Vide ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* ¹¹ *Ibid.*

was imprisoned by the English. Cleverly, the English put Gulab Khan also a prisoner in the same cell in order to obtain further information from Gurcharan Singh. It was then that Gurcharan Singh informed this British spy that the replies of the Russians had been conveyed to Budh Singh, the present Guru, for onward transmission to Guru Ram Singh. These were the replies with which Mihan Singh went to Burma and was found out by the British within the enclosure of Guru Ram Singh.¹²

Activities of Shankar Rai—a Russian Spy

Besides Gurcharan Singh the Russians and the Namdharis used a number of other go-betweens to carry on their correspondence. In 1883, the British were able to arrest a Hindu secret agent Shankar Rai who had been in the service of the Russians for 7 years.¹³ A number of letters were recovered from the person of Shanker Rai. A Gurmukhi letter from Guru Hari Singh to the Russian authorities is given below:

“By the Mercy of the One True Guru,
Written by Budh Singh Kooka to the Gobarnath
(Governor) of Turkistan and to General Jenoff
(General Ibanov) at Samarkand.

“Be it known to you that your letter for Baba Ram Singh¹⁴ in which you enclosed your own picture (Photos?) was received by us by the hands of Suba Gurcharan Singh, in a safe condition. We have been much delighted after reading the letter and looking at your likeness. The happy news of the arrival of your letter and of its bearer Gurcharan Singh was communicated to the Subas (leading Kukas) and other Kukas, and they have received the tidings with much pleasure. We have been

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Vide* Foreign Dept. Political-Secret-E Progs. 40-95 of January 1884.

¹⁴ The Kuka sources refute that the word *Baba* could have been used for Guru Ram Singh, by his brother in any of his letters to the Russians.

advised by them to send your letter on to the True Guru and the 12th King, Ram Singh, and to send an intelligent man to you with a letter to the following effect.

“We are not in need of your money, or arms and ammunition. By the Grace of the True Guru, we have all stores in readiness, the Kukas, including Subas, number 3,15,000 souls and they are always in readiness. Come here and show yourself, and then by the Grace of the True Guru, we will destroy the Malech Faranghis in a moment. Your coming (to this country) is true, and is confirmed by the following saying of the 10th Guru: ‘The fifth year will be auspicious, when only 50 years will remain to the Ganges. Mountains will fall, and the Jamuna will unite (with another river), and a powerful man will then take up his residence!’ (i.e. take possession of the country).

“Another saying of Guru Gobind Singh is as follows:

Verse: “The Kalghi Avtar will come into existence in order to blot out the sin of the world. He will mount his horse and use his bows and arrows and swords. The lions will come out of the mountains and make the people repeat the songs of piety. *Sambal* (a village in Muradabad Dist.) will be fortunate where Hari will appear in Harmandar (God’s Temple). May Guru Nanak and the other Gurus protect you and not bring the least difficulty on you.

“Do not let anxiety prey on your mind. By the Grace of the Guru, the Kookas are increasing every day. The hill Raja is our friend. All people are disaffected to the Malechas. On this account we have sent Misr Jas Ram to you. He is intelligent and will answer any question that you may put to him. Any message that you may send by him will be carried out thoughtfully.

“We shall sign ourselves ‘Safaid Singh’ (White) and ‘Lal Singh’ (Red).

'Signed: Budh Singh, Baba, dt. 5th Maghar H.E. 1937 (Corresponding to November-December 1880).'¹⁵

The Russian reply to the above letter was in Persian. It bore the seal of the Russian Governor of Katta Kurghan and was addressed to Budh Singh and Jas Ram, which may be reproduced below:

"In the Name of God.

"To the powerful, noble and mighty Raja Budh Singh and Subedar Jas Ram. Be it known to you that the bearer of the letter will deliver the answer of those in higher authority to the communication between us. Be pleased to act upon it. In truth it will be quickly fulfilled. The 'password' 'Red' and 'White' has been noted."

"The Governor of the Province's own seal is attached."¹⁶

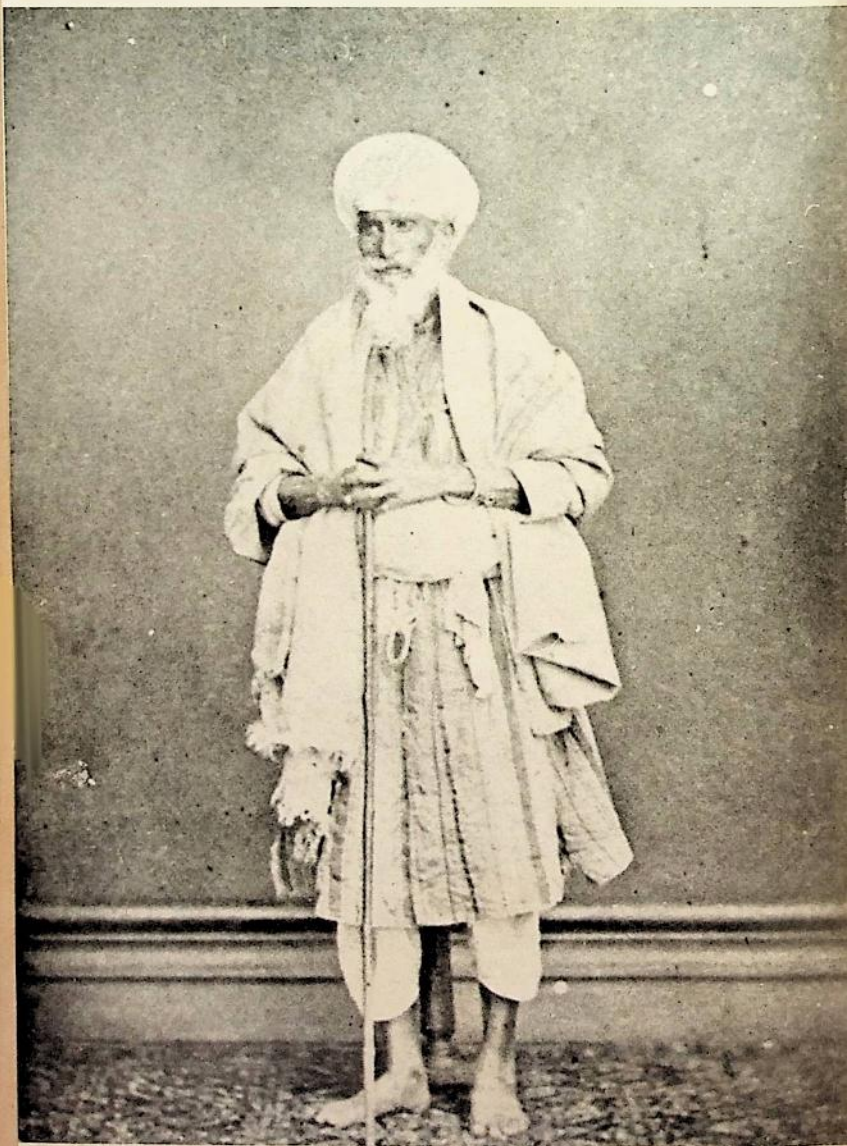
<p>Wasakhwich Hakim, Kotta Kurghan</p>
--

Both the above letters and some others were found in the notebook of Shanker Rai. The search was conducted by the Deputy Inspector Atta Muhammed Khan of the Sadar Police Station, Peshawar, in the presence of witnesses. Some of the British officers suspected about these letters that "it is quite possible that they may have been forged by Gulab Khan and Sayed Khan and palmed off on Shanker Rai." At the same time they felt that forgery was improbable because the letters bore the seal of the Russians.¹⁷

It may be, Gulab Khan and Sayed Khan got these letters direct from the Russians because they posed as Russian spies too. In order to get more money from the British side they entangled another Russian spy Shanker Rai. In fact, Shanker Rai gave his evidence to say that Gulab Khan

¹⁵ *Vide* Foreign Dept. Political-Secret-E Progs. 40-99 of January 1884.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* ¹⁷ *Ibid.*



A photograph of Gurcharan Singh Kuka—vide Secret Consultation, January 1882, Nos. 558-599
(Courtesy : National Archives of India)

and Sayed Khan had given him these letters, for safe custody.¹⁸ There came a stage when the English became extremely suspicious of the bona fides of their secret agent Gulab Khan and felt that the above letters were forgeries.¹⁹

There were a number of Namdhari and Russian secret agents involved in this game. Their thumb-nail sketches may be given below, including that of Gurcharan Singh.

1. GURCHARAN SINGH

He was the son of Attar Singh, a cultivator of village Chak Ramdas. He was about 75 years old. Even at that age he was very strong. According to the Government records:

“Though an old man, he is physically very strong and active, undergoing great fatigue. He is remarkably erect and a very good specimen of a Sikh soldier.”²⁰

It is interesting to note that Gurcharan Singh belonged to the well-known family of Pirana who, in the time of Guru Nanak, travelled all over Afghanistan, visiting Kabul, Kandhar, Ghazni, Bokhara, and converted a large number of people there. At Kabul he erected a Dharamsala which was still called ‘Pirana Sahib ki Dharamsala’.

Gurcharan Singh joined as a trooper in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at the age of 18. He took leave after the battle of Gujrat and went to Kabul, and he was there when Panjab was annexed. He returned to settle down as a zamindar and showed great hospitality when Guru Ram Singh was on a visit to his village Chak Ramdas. Guru Ram Singh raised him to a Mahant, and after the deportation of Guru Ram Singh, he travelled about holding Kuka meetings and making converts. He frequently visited Kabul, leaving home in April and returning about November. At Kabul he lodged in the Dharamsala of his ancestor. His younger brother, Gurmukh Singh (60), and his two sons were like-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Vide* Foreign Political-Secret Progs. 558-599 of January, 1882.

wise Kukas. According to the secret reports of the Government of India, Gurcharan Singh had become a Kuka about the year 1867. He was made a Suba in the same year and he visited Kabul in 1868. He left his home in 1878, reaching Samarkand in 1879 with a letter from the Kuka Guru to the Russians.

While in the Khalsa army, he used to serve Raja Lal Singh, who sent him to Kabul to get some information. He carried three wounds on his body, which he had received while fighting in the Khalsa army. He knew Gurmukhi and Pushto.²¹

2. GULAB KHAN

He was the secret agent working for and against the Russians during the Second Afghan War and afterwards. It is very difficult to categorise his loyalties. Money was perhaps the only consideration with him. He was a master-mind and for a long time he posed to the Russians as their spy, as well as, to the English as a British spy. H.M. Durand, Under-Secretary in the Foreign Political Dept. recorded the following opinion about him on 30th December 1881:

“Gulab Khan is probably drawing pay from both sides, or trying to do so.”²²

He was greatly instrumental in the arrest of Gurcharan Singh and Shanker Rai.

He was the son of Alla Ditta Khan — caste Gakhar of Panchgrain (Rawalpindi). Originally he was employed in the telegraph department as Sub-Inspector on Rs. 30. He deserted his job at Naushera in June 1879. In August 1879, Sir Louis Cavagnari received a letter from Gulab Khan from Kutta Kurghan in Russian Turkistan. He offered to act as a spy if his desertion from service was forgiven. Mr. Christie corresponded with Gulab Khan with the

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

approval of the Foreign Department and invited him to return.²³

Gulab Khan arrived back in Peshawar on 3rd October, 1879 and met the Commissioner who recorded his statement, and sent it to the Panjab Government and also to the Foreign Department of the Government of India. The Commissioner was directed to send Gulab Khan to Lahore. He was about 40 years of age, tall and rather thin and very intelligent looking. He maintained a diary since the year 1878.

Gulab Khan's grandfather Bungas Khan was a Tehsildar in Ranjit Singh's time. Gulab Khan entered the telegraph department in 1863. He wanted to go with the Yarkand Mission but:

"My department did not let me resign my job. Raja Moti Singh of Poonch offered me a Risaldarship but my telegraph authorities stood in the way. In 1877, my uncle in the telegraph department ran away with my wife. In these circumstances, I deserted the job and decided to go to Swat and Yarkand. I roamed with the Powindahs right up to Ghazni. I became popular with them because I knew medicine and cured some of them. I visited Bukhara and Kutta Kurghan. There are a great many natives of India in Bukhara, quite 200 Muslims and 400 Hindus. In May 1880, I met the British spy Abdul Razzak at Kutta Kurghan."²⁴

From time to time, this spy supplied information to the British Government about the Kukas and about the conditions in Afghanistan and Central Asia. In February 1882, he sent a newsletter for which the British gave Rs. 500 as reward.²⁵

3. NARAIN DASS S/O GANDA MAL

His caste was Acharaj. He belonged to Hazru, district Rawal-

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Vide* Foreign Political Secret-EI-40-95 of January 1884.

pindi. He had lived in Turkistan for more than three years when Gurcharan Singh began his activity. He acted as a body washer to the Hindus. He took a letter from Gurcharan Singh from Tash Kurghan to the Russian Governor at Samarkand in April 1880. In fact he used to act as a go-between for Gurcharan Singh and the Russians for delivering messages.²⁶

4. RAM CHARAN TORA, ALIAS NANA RAO, MARATHA

He arrived in Samarkand on 13th August, 1879 from Orenburg with the Russian Prince who visited the river Oxus in September 1879. He claimed to be the descendant of Nana Rao Maratha. He had an interview with Gurcharan Singh and expressed his opinion to the Russians about the nature of the Namdhari movement. He knew Russian and was more or less a Russian in habits. He absconded from India after the *mutiny* and was a short man of dark complexion aged about 40 years.²⁷

5. MAYA HINDU

He was the native of Gujranwala, and was a Jemadar in the native regiment. He also absconded after the *mutiny*. He used to live at different places in Russia and Afghan-Turkistan, and acted as a messenger and agent of Gurcharan Singh. On 20th December, he took one such letter from Gurcharan Singh to the Russian Governor at Samarkand and received a reward of 500 Tangas and a Chogha.²⁸

6. SHANKAR RAI

He belonged to the Bhatt caste. He was from Haripur, district Hazara and was 34 at the time of his arrest. He was a Russian spy. He lived for about 7 years in Russian Turkistan, chiefly at Kutta Kurghan. He used to supply important

²⁶ *Vide* Foreign Political Secret Progs 558-599 of January 1882.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

information to the Russians about Afghanistan and other parts of Central Asia. He accompanied Gurcharan Singh to Peshawar in October 1880. According to the Government records:

“He is very intelligent, twists his moustaches like a Dogra and has a beard.”²⁹

He told the British authorities that he left his home in India after quarrelling with his mother-in-law. He joined the Police service at Kutta Kurghan. He gave to the English the names of Balak Singh of Phagwara, and Mansukh of Jammu who lived there.³⁰

The genuineness of all the above facts cannot be vouchsafed. The factor of secret agents exaggerating and even fabricating material cannot be ruled out. Gulab Khan, who is the chief source of our information, was perhaps the most untrustworthy person even in the eyes of his employers. The British were thoroughly disillusioned with him and suspected him of being in the pay of the Russians as well.

In spite of this, it would be wrong to deny that the Kukas made important contacts with the Russians in Central Asia. No one can dispute the patriotism of the Kukas. If they were trying to seek help from every quarter for the cause of the motherland, it should not but be properly understood. Many other patriots of India did likewise in times to come.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XI

BISHENSINGH ARORA OF KABUL THE KUKA SUBA IN RUSSIA

Bishen Singh, in Russian Service, was said to have Command of Several Regiments, and some of the Kukas with him Hold High Appointments. . . .

D. S. P. Ludhiana

2 June 1888

THE CAREER AND ROLE of this Namdhari is shrouded in mystery. It seems the Government of India could not obtain any direct evidence of his activities. They collected whatever they could from various Kuka sources and their own secret agents regarding the personality and character of this Namdhari. The following chronological reports about Bishen Singh may be reproduced from a secret file of the Government of India, in the Foreign—Political Department pertaining to the year 1889.¹

April 1880 — Report of D.S.P. Ludhiana

“The Kukas are at present in a state of excitement; they hold frequent consultations, and Baba Budh Singh of Bhaini (the Kuka leader) is visited by men from distant places. One Bishen Singh, Arora, a Kuka of great wealth, has agencies in Peshawar, Kabul, Bokhara and Russian territory, and is the medium of communication between the Russians and Budh Singh. Russian emissaries in disguise meet Budh Singh’s agents through Bishen Singh’s assistance.”

*June 1880 — Report of Samand Singh
Lambardar*

It was reported by him that Bishen Singh was with the Russians. Six months back he had from the Russians a

¹ Confidential Foreign Dept. Secret-F Progs. 114-115 of August 1889.

suit of broadcloth, which was forwarded to Guru Ram Singh. According to this informer, Bishen Singh had been converted to Kuka faith by Balak Singh of Hazro.

August 1880 — Version of Joga Singh

According to one view, when Guru Ram Singh was arrested, a man named Bishen Singh was sent to Russia via Turkistan to plead the cause of the Kukas. According to a report of the District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, Joga Singh of Dhulkot, in the Ferozepur District had stated that:

“12 years ago he accompanied Guru Ram Singh to Huzro, in the Rawalpindi District, where they met Bishen Singh, who stated he was a resident of Kabul, and was in the confidence of the Sardars, who employed him in collecting information about Hindustan. He said that at times he used to live in Peshawar. Joga Singh again met Bishen Singh at the Anandpur fair in the Hoshiarpur District, about 10 years ago. He said that the Sakhis (Prophecies) recovered from the Badh Tirath tank, at Haripur in the Sirsa district, foretell that Bishen Singh will lead a Muhammedan army across the North-west frontier into the Panjab and added that Bishen Singh is in communication with the Russians, as also are twelve other Kukas who escaped from Malerkotla after the disturbances of 1872, and made their way to Russian territory.”

October 1880 — D. S. P. Lahore and D. S. P. Ludhiana

It was reported by the District Superintendent of Lahore that Bishen Singh had been created a Suba by Mahant Gurcharan Singh ... and that they were preparing for journey together to Bokhara.

On 9th October, the Dist. Supdt. of Ludhiana reported to the Government that Budh Singh had received “a letter from Bishen Singh to the effect that the Russians had assumed a hostile attitude towards England.” He got this

information through his informer Lal Singh of Gumti who had met Budh Singh at Bhaini.

6th November, 1880 — D.S.P. Ludhiana

The above officer reported to the Government that according to his information from an agent named Dewa Singh of Sanghera:

“... in Sambat 1939 (A.D. 1882) the Russians would invade India, and would be accompanied by Bishen Singh....”

23rd April, 1881 — D.S.P. Ludhiana

“Information has been received from a secret agent that Bishen Singh, who is at present in Central Asia, has sent a message to Budh Singh, asking him to send a trustworthy Kuka to meet him. He also sent word that he had been obliged to eat with the Russians, for which he hoped to be forgiven. He said the English would be treated with ten times the severity they showed to the blacks.”

February 1882

According to the District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, there prevailed a widespread rumour among the Kukas that Guru Ram Singh had escaped from Rangoon. “Guru Ram Singh had joined Bishen Singh, who would guide the Russian army to Hindustan....”

26th March, 1882

It was reported further by the above officer that four Kukas of Jammu had left for Russian territory to meet Bishen Singh.

20th May, 1882

It was suspected that Bishen Singh had sent his agents to India in order to get some military intelligence. Russians wanted to know why the English had disbanded “so many of their native regiments.” The possibility of recruiting

disbanded soldiers for Russian service was to be explored through Bishen Singh.

5th July, 1882 — D.S.P. Gurdaspur

It was reported by the above Police Officer that Bishen Singh, along with several Kukas, had met the Russian General at Bokhara. He was also contacting the Afghan leader. Kukas were showing signs of activity. They were leaving for Russian territory to inquire from Bishen Singh as to when the Russian invasion of India would take place for restoring the Khalsa Raj.

8th September — D.S.P. Ludhiana

“Baba Budh Singh of Bhaini had sent two letters to Bishen Singh by the hands of four Kukas, and a Kuka woman.” Russians were making warlike preparations and intended to attack India in Sambat 1941 (A.D. 1884-85). The above information was obtained by the D.S.P. (Ludhiana) by sending two secret agents to Hazro, where they stayed with a nephew of the late Balak Singh, and where they happened to meet Hira Singh, a cousin of Bishen Singh. They got the above information from Hira Singh.

20th September, 1884 — Punjab Special Branch Confidential Report

Nine Kukas were reported to have proceeded to Russia to visit Bishen Singh.

11th October, 1884 — D.S.P. Gurdaspur

“It is said that Suba Bishen Singh has 300 followers with him, and twice a week visits the Ruler of Bokhara, who is a creature of the Russian Government. Ram Singh is believed to have mentioned that when he died, Bishen Singh would succeed him as Guru.”

6th December, 1884 — D.S.P. Ludhiana

“... a short while ago a Kuka named Sukha Singh, alias Suchet Singh, visited Bhaini and delivered a letter to Baba

Budh Singh from the well-known Kuka Suba Bishen Singh in Russian territory, requesting him to be informed of the state of the country, army, etc., and inquiring whether the Hindus and Muhammedans were happy and contented under British rule."

30th May, 1885 — *D.S.P. Ludhiana*

Bishen Singh, the well-known Kuka in Russian territory, had made a visit to Bhaini two years back. He brought a chogha and the portrait of the Russian Emperor for Budh Singh. He took back with him "a copy of Ram Singh's likeness." The chogha was said to be in the possession of Mangal Singh of Gahil, Patiala State.

27th June, 1885 — *D.S.P. Ludhiana*

The above officer's report contained the names of those Kukas who lived in the Russian territory with Bishen Singh. The names are given below:

1. Lahora Singh.
2. Peshaura Singh (of the family of Maharaja Ranjit Singh).
3. One or two members of the family of Sham Singh Attariwala (the hero and martyr of the battle of Subraon).
4. Kanh Singh of Sangowal in the Ludhiana Dist.
5. Sohel Singh of Kup in Malerkotla
6. 300 or 400 other Kukas

25th July, 1885	}	<i>D.S.P. Ludhiana</i>
19th June, 1886		
24th July, 1886		
2nd October, 1886		
4th December, 1886		
23rd July, 1887		

The above police officer informed the Government that Baba Budh Singh had received a letter from Bishen Singh,

in which the latter had asked for the despatch of 100 young Kukas to the Russian territory. Dalip Singh was also reported to be in Russia. The Kukas heard these tidings with great excitement and performed Chandi-path. They eagerly anticipated the invasion of India by Dalip Singh along with Bishen Singh and the Russians.

10th December 1887 — D.S.P. Jullundur

Jowahir Singh, Kuka of Peshawar, was said to have returned from Russia with a letter from Maharaja Dalip Singh. It was written in that letter that Bishen Singh intended to visit Bhaini and Anandpur in February next.

8th October, 1887 — D.S.P. Hoshiarpur

"A man named Bishen Singh, who is in the service of the Amir of Afghanistan arrived at Hoshiarpur on 8th October, and stayed with Tulsi Ram, a pensioner, for one day, and with Sardar Zulfiqar Khan, extra Assistant Commissioner, for one night. The reason of his visit is unknown."

3rd March, 1888 — D.S.P. Hoshiarpur

Bela Singh Nihang of Nankana, Lahore District, had informed that Bishen Singh, now in the service of Maharaja Dalip Singh in Russia, had been moving about in various parts of the Panjab to know the feelings of the people towards the Maharaja. He had now left India to rejoin Dalip Singh.

2nd June, 1888 — D.S.P. Ludhiana

The above officer intimated to the Government that: "Bishen Singh, in the Russian service, was said to have command of several regiments, and that some of the Kukas with him hold high appointments, and that Bhagwan Singh, alias Arbangi Das, the proclaimed murderer, is with him."

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Besides the above reports of the police officers of Lahore, Ludhiana, Jullundur and Hoshiarpur about Bishen Singh — the Kuka Suba in Russia — it is important to add that

in the Kuka Sakhis (Prophecies), Bishen Singh was specially alluded to. It was predicted that "Bishen Singh, in the garb of a Fakir," will be living in Russian dominions. The Czar will have a dream in which Bishen Singh will tell him of the oppressions of the English (Mahan Malech), and will ask him to help the restoration of the Khalsa rule.

Again, in the Kuka 'Bara Mah' (or cycle of song), which was recited at the annual Baisakhi fair held at Amritsar in the spring of 1884, by Dewa Singh of Shahbazpur, Bishen Singh was referred to in the following manner:

"Bishen Singh, the Guru's precious jewel and martyr, who has a large following has entered into negotiation with others, who have expressed their readiness to join him."²

Thirdly, Bishen Singh was also referred to by a Kuka prisoner before he was hanged, in the year 1871.

² *Vide ibid.*

CHAPTER XII

POLITICAL VIEWS OF GURU RAM SINGH

(As revealed through his letters written in exile)

We Shall not always be Surrounded by Hornets; it is only for a time
which will soon pass away.

Oh Brethren do None of You Continue in Their Service.

Guru Ram Singh
(From Exile)

THE POLITICAL ASPECT of the Kuka movement is not without controversy. For a long time it was believed that Guru Ram Singh stood for a social and religious reform of the society in the Panjab, but British suspicion turned him into a political fighter. Many historians and leaders in the Panjab held the opinion that there was, in the beginning, no political motive or ideal before Kukas. It was the question of cows-laughter that provoked them into an open rebellion. They had been regarded as the protector of cows and social reformers.

But recent researches and a more intense study of the subject has revealed a different picture, although the first one is not totally obliterated. In fact, it is impossible to dissociate the Namdhari movement from the revival of Sikhism under Guru Gobind Singh in the 17th century, and the rise of a sovereign State of the Sikhs at Lahore in the 19th century. The whole inspiration of the Namdhari movement seems to have been drawn from the lone fight which Guru Gobind Singh waged against the political master of India, namely, Aurangzeb and against the religious monopolists such as the Brahmans, Ram Rais, Udasis and other Faqirs. The Kukas likewise had to fight against similar forces.

Similarly, it was impossible for the Sikhs to forget the sovereignty and glory which they had enjoyed in the time of

Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In their heart of hearts they always hoped to redeem and repair that golden beam of liberty which had been lost in the middle of the 19th century. This internal struggle in their heart, this desire for resurrection, this urge to win back their liberty, manifested itself in the form of the Namdhari movement.

In the time of Guru Gobind Singh religion was the basis of the struggle against the political and doctrinal oppressions of Aurangzeb. Under Guru Ram Singh, religion was again the foundation and corner-stone of the fight against the political injustice and Christian dominance of the English rule. By making freedom an essential attribute of his true religion, Guru Ram Singh was not only giving a living form to the message and ideals of Guru Gobind Singh but he was also acting as a forerunner of other patriots of India who thought that patriotism was no less a religion. In fact, it was during this period that Bankimchander Chatterjee was defining nationalism in terms of religion. In times to come, Lokmanya Tilak, Swami Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghosh stood and fought for the ideals of freedom from the platform of religion. Kukas were, therefore, the real forerunners of all these patriots. In the above circumstances it would be wrong to deny that social reform, religious revival and political emancipation were in any way separated from the basic scope and aims of the Kuka movement. The revival of their political glory was definitely their great aim as well as a part of their religion.

The English understood the real character of this movement as early as the year 1866. From time to time, they obtained reports from private sources, secret agents, Commissioners and Police officials about the nature of the Kuka movement. As early as 1863, they had been compelled to impose restrictions on the movements of Guru Ram Singh although the movement at that time hardly seemed to be outside the orbit of religion and reform on the surface. In 1866, Col. R. G. Taylor and Mr. Donovan had warned the Government that "the cry of rebellion has gone in throughout India... and the whole place is

now boiling for Christian blood.... Guru Gobind raised men and money in precisely the same manner." These warnings were given at least six years before the Malerkotla incident.

Even the postal system of the Kukas was hardly conditioned for purposes of religious activity. In the words of District Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana (1878):

"Their system of disseminating news or instructions rapidly among the sect is perfect. For example, four Kookas are despatched to the nearest Kooka villages in different directions, from each of which fresh parties according to the urgency of the matter start off, and this is continued quietly without attracting attention until the news has reached every village in which there is a Kooka. Their communications, as a rule, are verbal, and they avoid taking anyone into confidence unless he is known personally to be a staunch Kooka. This is to guard against secret Police agents disguised as Kookas. Our only chances of now getting reliable news is through real Kookas, if we can buy them over."¹

It is clear that such a postal system was designed to convey important messages of a political nature or at least anti-British contents. No such secrecy could be required to forge strings of religion. Such secrecy presupposed the presence of hostility or enemy forces.

Similarly, even the Guru-Mantra or sacred initiation verse, tells us of its political character. It said: "First consent to death, give up the desire to live, become the dust of the earth, then come to me." This shows that the Namdhari Guru demanded every kind of sacrifice from his disciples, for religious performances or political ventures. It is important to remember that Guru Gobind also demanded of his followers complete social surrender and sacrifice.

It may also be interesting to mention that the contacts of the Kukas with the Russians in Central Asia and the Rulers

¹ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 188-195 of October 1881.

of Kashmir and Nepal could not have been forged without political objects. The Namdhari Guru stood for non-cooperation with the Government as well as for Swadeshi. This could not be merely a part of religious activity. It was to emancipate his followers from all economic temptations the Imperialists could have offered. It was to prepare them for a political crusade. In the Government records, Guru Ram Singh is quoted again and again as having mentioned his political ambitions. One of the secret reporters of the Government, records the following words of Guru Ram Singh:

“Guru Gobind Singh Sahai . . .

“I will declare my religion. I will defeat the Faranghi and put the crown on my head and blow the Sunkh . . . A great battle will take place on the banks of Jamuna and blood will flow like the waters of the Ravi . . . Insurrections will take place in the country . . . The Khalsa will reign.”²

From his exile, the political views of Guru Ram Singh are also revealed to us in many of his letters written from Burma. He claimed to be inspired when writing to the Sikhs. He referred to the various Sakhis, foretelling the restoration of the Khalsa rule. He discussed the prophecies of Guru Gobind Singh about disturbances which were to break out in the 19th century. He assured his disciples of his determination to come back. He instructed them to unite. He prohibited them from taking service under the Government, emphasising with certainty the overthrow of the British rule. He threatened to repeat the performances of the year 1857, if he were not released. He asked about the Peshawar Railway; the progress of the Anglo-Afghan War; the advances of the Russians towards Kabul; the Sirhind Canal and the Raja of Nepal. He enquired

² *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 273-284 of August 1872.

(The Namdhari sources do not subscribe to the genuineness of such words purported to have been said by their Guru, especially in the first person.)

about the recruitment of soldiers in the Panjab and the impressment of carriages and oxen by the British authorities.

In one of his letters Guru Ram Singh laid great stress on the necessity of visiting Sohawa, a shrine in Bikaner. There was a Sakhi (prophecy) about this village to the effect that when the Pipal tree there overshadows the Jand tree which grows in it, the Khalsa rule will recommence. The Jand was now nearly hidden by the Pipal. The Kukas considered that this indicated the commencement of their rule.³

In one of his letters Guru Ram Singh wrote the following:

“Oh Khalsa! witness the doings and the workings of the Creator and see what He brings forth. Since my arrival here, I have, through the Grace of the Guru Sahib, divined many of the interpretations of the Sakhis This is the Guru's order that in the beginning of the 34th year (3rd April, 1878, corresponds with 1st Chet 1935), disturbances will commence and the rebellion will take place in the different countries. Consider, O Khalsa! that disturbances have commenced in the 34th year (Russo-Turkish War). Hereafter all that has been predicted by the Sacha Padsha Kalghiwalā (Guru Gobind Singh) will be fulfilled; rest assured of this. It is not necessary to write at length; you can understand for yourselves. All else predicted has reference to the ruin and destruction of the rulers, the signs of the times dating from the 34th year. Briefly, all the sayings will be fulfilled. I always said that if anything transpired in 34, then all would come to pass. So, as predicted 34 has borne its fruits; in the future look forward to the doings and the workings of God; see what he will disclose.”⁴

In the same letter, Guru Ram Singh discussed the chances and time of his coming back to the Panjab. He said:

“The brethren wrote enquiring when I would return. Khalsaji ! I will return at the whisking of the broom

³ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 188-195 of October 1881.

⁴ *ibid.*

(intended to mean the destruction of the Government). The brethren also enquired, in case of a disturbance, where should they strike? In case of a disturbance, all should combine, and after mature consideration, strike in the most befitting place; but the disturbance, at present, is far removed. Just now the fire is not in the flames; wood and fuel are simply being collected."⁵

In another letter, Guru Ram Singh assures his disciples:

"O Khalsaji ! we shall not always be surrounded by hornets; it is only for a time, which will soon pass away. . . ." ⁶

In the same letter Guru Ram Singh advised his followers not to take up service with the English. He said:

"O Brethren! do none of you continue in their service (i.e. the English); if any do they will suffer many hardships. Several orders of the Guru Sahib exist for killing them. . . ." ⁷

At another place, Guru Ram Singh predicted:

"Rulers and subjects will all be grounded to powder like flour. . . . For the protection of the Sant Khalsa, a Mohammedan will appear from the West, and collect all, and eradicate the Malechas So we are the Sant Khalsa and we have suffered much and the times are ominous. His protection of the Sant Khalsa has been foretold, and no doubt such will be the case. The time for the removal of persecutions of Sadhs and kine has arrived." ⁸

Again, Guru Ram Singh threatened in one of his letters addressed to Samand Singh:

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Vide ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

(According to documents with the Kukas the last line should be "several orders exist for inflicting different sufferings on them" and not "killing them.")

⁸ *Ibid.*

"If the knife is not early removed from off the neck of the cow, it will be unfortunate for the world."⁹

In the same letter Guru Ram Singh said:

"Up to the present they have not been able to intercept any of our communications or to catch our messengers, but now they keep a careful lookout. The Guru alone is 'Parda Kaj'. . . . They entertain very great fear of my person. They fear me as one fears death. Consequently they do not permit the people to come and see me."¹⁰

Further, in a letter, Guru Ram Singh gives the following instructions to one of the Kukas who reached his place of exile:

"Come to me when I wave my sheet and do not stand, but just pass on. There is no danger even if you do so twenty times a day. After you have understood the contents of this letter, wash it with water. You should carefully attend to these instructions. God will soon put an end to the present time of affliction. I have thoroughly understood the contents of the letter brought by you. The Guru has foretold that there will be disturbances till the year 1940 Hindu Era 1883 A. D. . . . The time is at hand when the Malechas will perish. It is the Guru's orders that except the Sant Khalsas (Kookas) all others will follow the Malech. . . .

"2. Now the prophecy of my return to the native country is to be fulfilled. The words of godly men are true and should be trusted. We have suffered much at the hands of the people, and will not undergo troubles for ever The Goddess of Destruction will now inflict due punishment on the Malech. Many have already perished in Turkey, and the final and great destruction is at hand."

The above letter was addressed by Guru Ram Singh to his brother Guru Hari Singh.¹¹

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* ¹¹ *Ibid.*

On 19th July, 1879 Mr. J. P. Warburton, Dist. Supdt. of Police, Ludhiana sent the following message to the D.I.G. of Police, Ambala Circle, Jagraon:

"I have good news to give you. Yesterday on my way to Jagraon, I met a suspicious-looking Kooka and at once examined him very carefully. As soon as he told me that his name was Narain Singh, a resident of village Rodah, station Bagah Purana, district Ferozepore, the idea struck to me that he might be one of the two men reported by me in May last as having been deputed by Budh Singh to search for Ram Singh. I lost no time in searching him and to my intense delight I found a heap of Ram Singh's original letters, the contents of which afford unmistakable evidence of the bearer (Narain Singh) having just returned after paying him a visit. Some of the documents are most important. In most false names have been assumed. Seditious teaching; exciting ill-feeling against us; asking for news about the Russians, Afghans and the English; wishing to know if it is true that the English have made peace with Kabul; interdicting his followers from taking service with us; wishing to know if many Punjabis were killed in the recent Afghan War and whether there had been much weeping and mourning for them; making particular enquiries about the Badh Tirath Tank; whether it is resorted to by Rajas and small faquirs; and if the copies of the prophecies Narain Singh has delivered to him (Guru Ram Singh) were genuine, taken from the Pothi recovered from the Badh Tirath Tank, or merely an invention; enquiring if the Russians and the English had declared peace; if so, he looked upon it as a great calamity; but adding that this could not be the case as Lahore must be recovered according to the Guru's word in 34 years' time, reckoning from the year it was taken by the English — are some of the most prominent subjects discussed in this voluminous correspondence, which I think, covers some 18 or 19 pieces of paper, large and small.

“Having seen Ram Singh’s writing before, I am more satisfied that these are also in his handwriting. But if more proofs were wanted, it is forthcoming in such form as will satisfy the most exacting judge. For example:

“One letter is written on a bit of paper which apparently formed the outer cover of a packet of powders, prescribed by the doctor who attends Ram Singh, and bears the following in English:

“STATE PRISONER”

“One powder to be taken three times a day.”

“For Ram Singh.”

“A second letter has the word ‘arrowroot’ on it in English, written evidently by the same person who prescribed the powders. And in this paper, arrowroot must have been sent for the prisoner’s use when he was ailing.

“The paper of a third Gurmukhi letter has the word ‘sugar’ and dated 30th January, 1879 recorded on it in English and must have formed the packet of sugar sent with the arrowroot.

“A fourth shows on one side a printed form in English such as are used for prisoners admitted into the jail hospital and gives the following particulars:

Name	—	Nga Kyo
Age	—	20
Jail Register	—	No. 5992
Date of admission		29th October 1878.
<i>Case and symptoms, prescription and diet are given in pencil and cannot be made out.</i>		
<i>Date of discharge—12th December, 1878.</i>		

“It will be easy to ascertain who this prisoner Nga Kyo is, and if he is in the same place where Ram Singh is at present confined.

“A fifth paper has on one side, part of a printed

Commissariat form of tenders of contracts and their conditions and at the foot bears the following in print :

“By order of the Commissary-General,
(*Sd.*) *J. McMullin, Major,*
Assistant Commissary-General.

“I think it will be easy to prove from these five papers that they were brought from the place where Ram Singh is imprisoned.

“I have arrested Narain Singh as a vagrant and suspicious character, under Sections 504 and 505 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and will await the Inspector-General's instructions. Meanwhile, I am endeavouring to persuade Narain Singh to speak out; but I am by no means sanguine of success. I have, however, taken the precaution of having the papers recovered witnessed properly and Narain Singh has admitted in his statement before the Tehsildar (Magistrate) that they were found in his possession; beyond this he declines to give any further information or explanation.”¹²

Along with the above report Mr. Warburton sent a translation of the letters found on the person of Narain Singh. Some of the letters may be quoted in part.

Translation of Paper No. 3

“When the Malech after their defeat retreat to the ‘Madar Des’ (probably intended for mother country), then this body will return to its native country. By madar des I mean Ludhiana. Rely on this word. And you also asked where you should retreat during the disturbance. At present do not go in any direction. When the Malech on their retreat from the west, arrive at Lahu-maharaj-ka-pura (Lahore), then all the wise men of the sect should collect, and after consultation fix on some suitable spot where you can pass your time and

¹² *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 188-195 of October 1881.

pray thus humbly to the Guru, 'O true King! remove us from these dangers to some place of safety.' The result will be to your advantage, as the Guru can accomplish everything. He can preserve you in burning fire." ¹³

Translation of Paper No. 12

"The time has now arrived. Preparations are progressing. Many people say that the Nepalis have arrived at Ava and that they have taken to Ava to fight. Let us see what the Guru will do in future. And brother wherever you go, deliver my salutations to all." ¹⁴

Similarly on 28th July, 1880 Dhan Singh of Gumti of the Nabha State was arrested by the British authorities at Rangoon in the act of communicating with Guru Ram Singh. Two letters of Guru Ram Singh were recovered from his person. In one of the letters Guru Ram Singh wrote:

"Having been sent by the Khalsa, I have come to this place. If the Khalsa wish to send me further on, they can do as they please. Perform bhajans, paths and bhogs steadfastly. All things will then go on well. If I am the same individual as that referred to in Prem Samarag, Sakhis, Ram Mirigind and in the book discovered in Paihlad Sagar, viz. the 12th incarnation, I will surely come to the country and destroy the Mir and Pir. If I am not that man, why do you come over here? There are hundreds of carpenters like me in the country...." ¹⁵

This was the time when Guru Ram Singh was expecting further disturbances. In the same letter referred to above Guru Ram Singh advised his followers:

"If the war breaks out, 25 of you should pray to the Guru as follows: 'O Guru ! Take us to the place which

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.



you deemest fit for us to live in !' The Guru will hear your prayers."¹⁶

All the above letters are sufficient to prove the political views held by Guru Ram Singh. It is most significant to note that many of the above letters were written by Guru Ram Singh at a time when the Second Afghan War was being fought. It is clear the Kuka leader was keenly and anxiously observing its course. On 19th March, 1881 Mr. Warburton recovered a number of letters from Attri, a leading Kuka woman. In one of the letters found from Attri at a secret meeting of the Kukas near Bhainee Sahib, Guru Ram Singh enquired:

"How is the war going on? Who have gained the victory or has been defeated? Is the war progressing or has been stopped? Has Russia arrived to aid Kabul or not? What is the state of crops in the country? Whether good or bad? And what is the rate of wheat? Have the people been pressed for camel and carts? If the troops of Patiala, Nabha and Jind and other Jagirdars have been sent towards Peshawar. Are the congregations firm or not?"¹⁷

Between the years 1878 to 1881, the Government captured a large number of letters written by Guru Ram Singh to his followers. The Kuka disciples undertook long and expensive journeys to meet their leader. All the attempts of the Government to isolate Guru Ram Singh failed. More and more restrictions were imposed, and Guru Ram Singh was removed from Rangoon to Mergui. The Kuka disciples reached even there and the contacts continued. The Government of the Panjab was able to buy over the loyalty of a Kuka named Ishar Singh in order to procure some of the original letters of Guru Ram Singh. Ishar Singh was originally a Chamar. He became a favourite in the time of Guru Ram Singh and held charge of his stables. After Guru Ram

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 142-46 of April 1881, letter No. 1.

Singh's exile, Ishar Singh was expelled by the next Guru due to his intrigues, although his father continued to be employed there. Ishar Singh handed over many letters of Guru Ram Singh to Warburton. The first letter was conveyed by him in August 1878 which was brought by Narain Singh from Rangoon. The Government adopted stringent measures to stop these communications but always failed. Some of the communications received by Guru Hari Singh from the Russians in Central Asia, were also conveyed to Guru Ram Singh.

The above contacts of the Kukas show a remarkable faith and devotion towards their Guru in exile. It is worthy to note that Guru Ram Singh advised his followers repeatedly not to undertake these dangerous journeys, but he always failed to prevent his followers from reaching him. It was mainly due to his anxiety for the safety and the security of his disciples that in one letter Guru Ram Singh implored with his disciples in the following words:

"I am in custody, but if any one of my men were to get into trouble, a fresh pain would be added to my sufferings. . . ." ¹⁸

These contacts were, however, extremely useful for maintaining the morale and faith of his disciples. It gave them the sheet-anchor of their mission, and the will to continue their fight. For students of History, the above contacts unfold to a great extent the political ideas of Guru Ram Singh. A word of caution is, however, essential in this respect. Many of the original letters are not traceable in the records of the Government, and a true verification about the quality of the translations found in the files is almost impossible. Some of the political views expressed by Guru Ram Singh in the above letters may not have been faithfully conveyed in these translations. Some of his expressions may have been misunderstood or purposely twisted. This is why the picture of his political views can hardly be regarded as perfect. But no one can deny after reading even these trans-

¹⁸ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 257-59 of August 1879.

lations that he regarded the restoration of the Sikh rule in the Panjab as an important part of his religious message and mission.

It may, as well, be stated that some of the original letters are also traceable. The views found in these original documents also give us the same impression and compel us to deduce the same conclusion, that is, Guru Ram Singh stood for the religious revival and the political resurrection of his countrymen. It is clear from all his writings that he believed in non-co-operation with the Government which he went on preaching even from his exile. He also advised his followers to live a devoted and dedicated life with religion as the base, with Swadeshi and non-co-operation with the Government as the weapons, and the desire to attain freedom as the political aim. These messages emerge again and again from his above writings.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STORY OF EXILE

It Will Probably be Necessary to Issue Warrants under Regulation III of 1818, as under the Ordinary Law These Men Would Have to be Examined by the Local Magistrates and Committed to the Local Jail.

J. F. S. 20 January 1872
(*A Member of G. G.'s Council*)

FROM THE middle of January, 1872, to the year 1885, Guru Ram Singh remained in Burma. It was on 18th January, 1872 that the Panjab Government sent the following telegram to the Home Secretary, Calcutta:

“Ram Singh, Kooka Leader, with Lakha Singh and Sahib Singh, his lieutenants, forwarded to Allahabad under charge of European Officers and Gurkha guards by this morning's train.”¹

From there, the Guru was sent away to Burma. Besides Guru Ram Singh, a number of his Subas were also deported from the Panjab. Rur Singh, Mulluk Singh and Pahara Singh were kept in the Asirgarh Fort. Pahara Singh died there on 2nd March, 1882 in confinement after suffering from acute nephritis. Hukma Singh and Man Singh were kept in the Chunar Fort, whereas Jawahar Singh, Lakha Singh and Brahma Singh were kept at Moulmein. Jawahar Singh died at Rangoon on 29th November, 1882 of old age and debility.

Sahib Singh and Khan Singh were exiled to Aden but in 1875, when their health suffered due to climatic reasons, they were transferred to the Hazaribagh Jail. Sahib Singh died on 10th June, 1879 in this jail at 12.30 P. M. Sahib Singh had been suffering from acute diabetes.²

¹ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 55-71 of 20th January, 1872.

² *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 1-2 of August 1879.

It is very difficult to ascertain from the records as to what kind of treatment was meted out to these Kuka prisoners. At Moulmein, the prisoners were paid 12 annas each per day. In August 1881, the health of Jawahar Singh at Moulmein was shown as good (not suffering from any serious ailment). On 29th November, he was reported as dead.³

WHY THEY WERE NOT TRIED

The Government of India held the view that the Kuka prisoners or the Subas of Guru Ram Singh should be brought to trial on specific charges. But the Panjab Government differed and insisted that they be kept in detention. Finally, the Government of India also agreed and reported the same to the Secretary of State for India. It shows that the pressure of the Panjab Government was too great and their detention under Regulation III of 1818 was absolutely due to their attitude. This is clear from the Government of India letter No. 60 dated the 27th December, 1872 (Fort William) addressed to the Secretary of State.⁴

It is important to note that the Panjab Government was frankly sanguine about the judicial trial. In their telegram dated the 19th January, 1872 they had written to the Government of India that they did not possess any direct evidence against Guru Ram Singh to be able to put him on trial.⁵

When this telegram reached the Government of India the very next day, the following minute was recorded by a member of the Viceroy's Council which exposes how the mind of the bureaucracy was acting:

"It will probably be necessary to issue warrants under Regulation III of 1818 as under the ordinary law these

³ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 320-321 of August 1882.

⁴ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 279-365 of June 1874.

⁵ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 70-72 of February 1872.

men would have to be examined by the local Magistrate and committed to the local Gaol....”⁶

(Sd.) J. F. S.
20th January 1872

Even before the Malerkotla incident, the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab had decided upon Guru Ram Singh’s deportation under Regulation III of 1818. On 9th September, 1871 he sent a Confidential letter to the Government of India containing the following views:

“The Lieut-Governor of the Panjab considers that it will be difficult, and may be impossible, to obtain any such evidence as would warrant his prosecution in a Criminal Court....”⁷

Under the above circumstances, it was impossible to expect any fair treatment or trial for the Kukas. A special mention may here be made about the lodging arrangements that were made for Guru Ram Singh in Rangoon in the year 1872. The Chief Commissioner of British Burma, in his letter No. 200-253P dated Rangoon 13th April 1872, wrote to the Government of India:

“...he would suggest that Ram Singh be located in the building now used as Cantonment Post Office which is situated close to the main guard, and is the house in which the late ex-King of Delhi was confined. It is a stockaded building.”⁸

In the same month, the Inspector-General of Prisons reported to the Chief Commissioner that the following expenses had been incurred for making arrangements for the “State prisoner Guru Ram Singh”⁹:

⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 7-20 of February 1872.

⁷ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 52-53 of 13th January, 1872.

⁸ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 13 of May 1872; Progs. 87-88 of June 1872.

⁹ Letter No. 312 of 5-4-1872, *vide ibid.*

1. Cow .. Rs. 75.
2. Food and servants .. Rs. 40 p. m.
3. Shoes and Clothing .. Rs. 40 (purchased).
4. Chair, table, pankha .. Rs. 50 spent.
5. 3 High caste Hindu prisoners,
besides one servant who arrived
with the prisoner from India .. Provided

The arrangements about Guru Ram Singh were also discussed in the Governor-General's Council. Lord Northbrook recorded the following minute in April 1872 in respect of arrangements proposed for Guru Ram Singh at Rangoon:

"I would put him into a separate house and give him the pony carriage, telling him that these indulgences would be withdrawn if he is discovered in correspondence with his adherents elsewhere. I would telegraph this."¹⁰

Another Member of the Governor-General's Council opposed the proposal of a pony carriage being placed at the disposal of Guru Ram Singh, and the Governor-General modified this provision as may be seen from the following telegram:

"Ram Singh be located in the Cantonment Post Office Building. A carriage may be occasionally hired for outdoor exercises if medical opinion advises it."¹¹

GURU RAM SINGH

During the 14 years of his exile, Guru Ram Singh may have sent one or two letters to the Government of India to vindicate his position. In fact, only a single letter to that effect is available in the records of the Government of India. Its authenticity is quite doubtful.

¹⁰ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs, of 13th May 1872.

¹¹ Telegram dated the 12th June, 1872 (Simla) — *vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 287-88 of June 1872.

Likewise, the other Kuka prisoners bore prison life with patience and courage. They did not petition the Government for pardons, or show any repentance for what they had done. However, we come across one petition submitted by the wife of a Kuka prisoner in the year 1875. This petition shows how much suffering was undergone by the dependants of these prisoners. In May 1875, Jivani, the wife of Man Singh, a Namdhari prisoner in the Chunar Fort, travelled a long distance to meet her husband. She submitted the following petition to the authorities:

“FIRST PETITION”

“17th May 1875”

“This petitioner is the wife of Man Singh Kooka, state prisoner confined in Chunar Fort. When the Government arrested Man Singh, your petitioner had five sons and two daughters. Our daughter who was 15 years old, died of grief after worrying for her father for 6 months. Four months after another son died at the age of 6. The second son aged 4 years died due to hunger. The remaining children are starving. In any way, I have begged my way to this place after covering a thousand miles to have a glimpse of my husband, leaving my children at the mercy of the Providence. I would like to see him for 10 days and then return.”¹²

On 5th June 1875 the same petitioner wrote again:

“Today is the 22nd day of your petitioner’s arrival but no permission is granted to see my husband. I have exhausted my funds.”¹³

The authorities did not allow this brave lady to see her husband as the Government did not want to encourage others. They also felt that there was no one knowing Punjabi

¹² *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 170-172 of June 1875.

¹³ *Ibid.*

to be present on behalf of the Government at the time of interview.¹⁴

Guru Ram Singh Shifted from Rangoon to Mergui

The Government proposed to cut off the Kuka prisoners from their relatives in the Panjab. Guru Ram Singh was kept in close confinement so that his disciples may never be able to approach him. But, about the year 1877, the Government learnt that many communications of Guru Ram Singh were reaching his disciples in the Panjab. This is why, in 1877 the authorities instructed the Chief Commissioner of British Burma to intercept all correspondence of Guru Ram Singh unless it was addressed to the Government of India.¹⁵

In November, the Panjab Government wrote to the Government of India:

"... it is notorious that in spite of prohibition and the directions which have been issued by the Government of India on the subject, Ram Singh does frequently correspond with his followers in the Panjab. Several copies of such letters have been confidentially made over to this Government."¹⁶

The Panjab Government also informed the Government of India in the same letter that a Bairagi Faqir was living nearby the place of Ram Singh's confinement and he was the means. The Panjab Government said:

"It is easy to throw letters attached to stones or clods of earth, over the walls, and to receive answers in the same manner."¹⁷

It was, therefore, suggested by the Lt.-Governor that Guru Ram Singh should be sent elsewhere.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 333-338 of June 1877.

¹⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 7-8 of November 1887.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

On 16th January, 1878 the Government of India ordered the Chief Commissioner of British Burma to remove Guru Ram Singh either to Tavoy or Mergui.¹⁹ The orders were, however, not carried out at once since it was not so easy to make necessary arrangements. In August 1878, the Government of India again advised the Chief Commissioner of British Burma that a guard of 7 at a cost of Rs. 1,052 a year may be employed. A new house costing Rs. 3,783 was also permitted to be built for Guru Ram Singh. The building was to be 30 ft. in length, 15 ft. in breadth, having a verandah, and surrounded by a palisade 9ft. in height. It was also to have a small kitchen and latrine.²⁰ Consequently, Guru Ram Singh was removed to Mergui and the following report about the same was sent to the Government of India:

“On Saturday the 18th ultimo the State prisoner Guru Ram Singh was placed on board ‘Ananda’ for conveyance to Mergui, where he arrived on 21st idem.”²¹

Between the years 1879 and 1881 many disciples of Guru Ram Singh reached Mergui to see their leader or to convey letters. Narain Singh, a Kuka of Ludhiana District, went to Rangoon in 1879. Some letters were thrown over the wall. According to Government:

“The stranger and Ram Singh were able to see each other at some distance but they could not meet or converse.”²²

Narain Singh while on his way to Rangoon stayed with Kushal Singh of Calcutta who was always friendly towards all Kukas. At Rangoon, he stayed with a Sikh carpenter.

¹⁹ Confidential Letter No. 69—Fort William dt. 16th January, 1878 from the Government of India to Chief Commissioner, Burma — *vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 138-39 of January 1878.

²⁰ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 237-41 of September 1878.

²¹ British Burma Political Dept. letter No. 7034 dt. 8-10-1880. *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 155-157 of October 1880.

²² *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 257-259 of August 1879.

In 1880, Dhan Singh of Gumti (Nabha State) was arrested at Rangoon by the British authorities. Two letters were recovered from his person. Similarly, in the year 1881 Minhan Singh went to see Guru Ram Singh. The Inspector-General of Police, Burma, informed the authorities, vide letter No. 176-35 dated 15th February, 1881:

"I have the honour to inform you that on 24th ultimo two Kookas giving names as Minhan Singh aged 27 years and Samund Singh aged 35 years arrived Mergui by P. S. Tavoy from Moulmein. The Deputy Commissioner advised them to leave the place. They promised to leave the next day. The guard over Ram Singh, composed of Burmans was warned to be specially on the alert and was visited late at night by a European Inspector; notwithstanding which, in the morning Minhan Singh was found inside Ram Singh's enclosure. He was arrested and in company with his comrade Samund Singh was sent to Moulmein."²³

In the circumstances, the Government again thought of removing Guru Ram Singh to Nicobar Islands in the year 1879, and to Table Land in the year 1881. But these ideas were never put into practice. The scheme for Table Land was referred to in the following manner:

"There was a fortnightly service (steamer) from Rangoon to Table Land. Weekly steamer was to be introduced shortly. The Chief Commissioner of Burma vide his Confidential letter No. 3008 RS suggested that Guru Ram Singh should be shifted to Table Land which forms one of the Cocos group. There is a Light House upon it with a European Keeper, in whose charge Ram Singh may be placed."²⁴

But the Government of India felt that even the above arrangement would not succeed in completely isolating

²³ Vide Home-Judicial-B Progs. 142-146 of April 1881.

²⁴ Vide Home-Judicial-A Progs. 146-149 of August 1881.

Guru Ram Singh. The following minute was written by Mr. Thompson on 3rd June, 1881, which shows the utter exasperation and failure of the authorities to snatch the Namdhari Guru from his disciples:

“The keenness and pertinacity with which Guru Ram Singh’s followers seek him, and the means at their disposal show the difficulties of cutting him off from all communications with his Panjab disciples. On Table Land he would be much more at liberty than on the mainland, and the Light House Keepers and the Lascars of the ‘Enterprise’ (a ship that touched that Island) could easily be bought over to convey written papers to Ram Singh’s agents at Rangoon and elsewhere.”²⁵

Views of Guru Ram Singh Regarding His Confinement

Guru Ram Singh referred in one of his letters to the way in which the British Government came to know about the activities of his disciples in Burma:

“Naina Singh arrived here some time ago and I gave him a letter. He made several copies of it and openly distributed them among the people. This information reached the British authorities. The authorities reported the matter to the Government and the facts were communicated to the officers here, pointing out the defective arrangements in regard to the watch kept on me. The Bara Sahib of this place enquired of me if Narain Singh had paid me a visit, and if I had given him a letter. I denied, upon which he told me that, according to the orders he had received from the Government, I should have to move to a jail or to another Island. I expressed my willingness to go to any place which the Government

²⁵ Minute of Mr. Thompson dated the 3rd June 1881, writing on Lord Ripon’s enquiry dated 3rd June, 1881 (*vide ibid*).

might choose as my abode. Nothing has still transpired and I am still here.”²⁶

Guru Ram Singh was keen to meet his people but he was equally anxious about their safety. This is why, from time to time, he discouraged his followers from visiting Burma. In one of his letters he described the arrangements made by the Government to isolate him, besides his other feelings:

“Brother, I do not look at their careful arrangements as any discomfort to myself. They may carry 20 muskets on their shoulders. My unhappiness is solely due to my Sikhs not being allowed to visit me freely. With the exception of my own people, I do not care to meet anyone. This is the long and short of the matter. They think if my letters reach Punjab, I shall send instructions to my Singhs and have them all cleared out of the country. So they take great precautions and consequently they have maintained a strict watch over me. I have nothing in my mind; but they dread the consequences of their deeds night and day. Brother, for this reason I have prevented you from visiting me. But the Sangat (my people) will not be kept back from coming.”²⁷

In the same letter Guru Ram Singh expressed his keen desire and love for a union with his people. He wrote:

“Brother, my wish to see you is many degrees stronger than yours, for the reason that you have many like me to see whereas I cannot get to see those who take the name of God. If the Guru will permit it I must see the Sangat and show myself to them. . . . Before the Guru I offer this ‘Guruji ! Let me see my Sangat’.”²⁸

In another letter he emphasises the same facts more forcefully:

²⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. of 188-195 of October 1881.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

"Brother, you are to me like life in body. I am even glad to meet a sweeper of the Panjab. It is most difficult for me to get sight of a Panjabi. I have repeatedly said that no one should come to me; but if necessary, a messenger should be sent once a year. No woman should be allowed to come."²⁹

In the same letter Guru Ram Singh referred to the precautions taken by the authorities in the following manner:

"The white man who rules over all the countries has issued orders, and his orders are attached to the walls here to this effect: 'Whoever speaks with him (Ram Singh) imprison him, if anyone throws anything inside from without, or if anything is thrown out to him from within imprison him also. Let no one stand opposite to him (Ram Singh). They are uselessly doing all this, as God has softened the hearts of their Sentries who comply with some of our wishes or do jobs for us.'³⁰

Similar precautions were taken by the English in respect of other prisoners. For example, some of the Kuka prisoners were posted at Chunar Fort. As a precaution the Government of India, Military Department, wrote to the Adjutant General in India in their letter No. 1369-S dated the 19th October, 1881 the following instructions:

"Para 2 : I am to state for the Commander-in-Chief's information that so long as the Kooka prisoners are kept at Chunar, the Government of India consider it undesirable that any Sikh soldiers should be sent there for duty."³¹

This letter was written to prevent the posting of the Company of 10th Native Infantry to Chunar because it had 21 Sikhs in its ranks.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Translation of Paper No. 27, *vide ibid.*

³¹ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 243-44 of October 1881.

THE KUKA BARA-MAH

It is important to note the burning desire of the Namdharis to see their Guru; their sentiments and emotions are fully depicted in a lyric poem which was widely circulated at Amritsar on the occasion of Baisakhi. The poem related different events in connection with each Hindu calendar month. Mr. Donald, Assistant to the Inspector-General of Police, Panjab, reported that on 10th April, 1884, one Deva Singh of Shahbazpur in Ferozepore District read out this poem at Amritsar to a Kuka assembly at Namdhari Dharamsala. According to the same officer:

"The poem caused considerable excitement amongst the listeners, some beating their breasts others throwing off their pugris, became Mastana in fact."³²

This poem was written by one Chanda Singh, resident of *Saboran* (or Jhabbar) village of district Gujranwala. The form of poetry was extremely popular and many copies were distributed by Chanda Singh. It expressed the ardent love of Kukas for Guru Ram Singh, his visit to Amritsar, murder of butchers, kine killing, Kuka uprising of 1872, imprisonment and exile of Guru Ram Singh and Subas, Russia's expected arrival, etc. etc.³³

The Kuka Bara Mah referred to above is a very long document which may be reproduced below only in part:

SECRET

Translation of the Kuka Bara Mah

By the Grace of the One True Guru
Salutation to Sat Guru.

Prostrating myself at the feet of the Sat Guru, I compose this Bara Mah. Help me O Sat Guru.

* * *

³² *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 272-274 of July 1884.

³³ *Ibid.*

I am a sinful girl.

I became beside myself with love for thee,
And I left off spinning my wheel

Forsaking my home I was quite alone and people
said I had lost my senses;

I could take no delight in anything.

I am thy sacrifice.

After a diligent search, I found myself a Guru in
Ram-Das-Puri

Communicating the Shabads he dispenses bliss

He cuts off the snares of birth and death

I am saved by the Sat Guru.

* * *

When Jeth set in, the English wrote to London

That the Singhs cared for no one but Akal (God) alone.

The sun is getting hot in Jeth, and the English
confer with one another to say

"These Singhs do not fear us.

Being Mastana they shout in their streets.

They fear no one but God."

* * *

They enquired whether anybody could prevent (the Singhs)
from shouting "Akal".

* * *

* * *

The Guru removed all doubts and scepticism during Bhadon.

* * *

He gave the choicest gifts to his Khalsa.

He made some Singhs Bihangams, and sent them to
different parts of the country in order to
cause the people to commit Shabad-Bani to memory.

The Sat Guru arranged every house to serve as a free
kitchen, so that nobody should remain without food.

Enemies bring innumerable false accusations against the
Khalsa.

The chiefs and leaders bear tales to the Government
and stand guilty before Dharam Raj.

They will all go to hell.

* * *

* * *

Having girded up his loins, the Sat Guru will mount a
horse escorted by the Singhs.

The sun and moon will be overawed by his glory.

The Mastanas will move about carrying clubs out like
the army of Rama advancing on Lanka.

The Sat Guru having mounted a horse, his Subas will
accompany him and appear as beautiful as a row of
Swans, and the procession will present the spectacle
of the halo round the moon, a marriage party round
the bridegroom; or an army round its leader.

Who can conceive the glory of this incarnation?

* * *

* * *

In the month of Katak, the Guru promoted faith and piety.

* * *

* * *

The Sat Guru issued another order and read it out to the
Sangat.

The Malechas from London have established slaughter
houses, which grieves the heart.

The Singhs should give up their lives in the name of God.

O Chanda Singh! in accordance with the Guru's Orders,
The Singhs girded up their loins, and became martyrs.

Those who believed in the words of the Guru gave up
their lives for the sake of religion. They made use of
their arms and levelled the butchers to the ground.

They cut the noose from the neck of the cow; and
for this act of piety, the Gods shouted with joy.

The back-biters slandered the Singhs and caused them
to be arrested.

* * *

* * *

In the midst of the frost of Poh the Sat Guru issued an
order.

He invited all the Subas and the Congregation to be
present at the next Magh Mela at Bhaini.

The Singhs kissed the Order when they received it, and were
exceedingly delighted.

All the Singhs of Malwa, Majha, Darop and the Bar, as
well as the Jumna Sardars . . . attended the meeting.

The future is in the hands of God.

O Chanda Singh! all the Singhs came
and the Cooks of the Sat Guru prepared cauldrons
of food for all

The Singhs then performed a Hom and
advanced on Malerkotla undaunted in their courage.

The Singhs marched to become martyrs for faith.

* * *

The Singhs joined the Martyrs, and the Sat Guru
started for a foreign country.

* * *
* * *

There is no comfort without the Sat Guru; all the Singhs are grieved.

The Singhs do not enjoy their sleep, and keep awake all night in anxiety. They do not find any relish in their food. Grief for the separation of the Guru is eating up their vitals.

Who will cause the Guru to meet me, so that I may make offerings to him?

I am sacrificed to the Guru.

O Chanda Singh! the Guru went to Burma;

The sea with folded hands prostrated itself at his feet,
and was rejoiced at its good luck in seeing him;
Fortune smiled on the country whither the Guru went.

* * *

The Sat Guru went to a foreign country. This made the congregation wear soiled clothes, and sorrowful.

O Sat Guru come to thy native land . . .

The beloved Singhs of the Guru, who have crossed the seas, look for thee, O Sat Guru repeating thy name on their beads.

O Sat Guru! many years have passed away since thou separated thyself from us.

All the congregations wait for thee just as Rama was expected by the people of Ajudhya

May the light of the Guru shine brilliantly !

The time to meet has come.

The congregations are thirsty for a sight of thee.

Like Bharat, the brother is waiting

O Raghupat (Rama) let us see thee now.

Mother Atri who is yet a spinster, is sacrificed on thy feet; she sits at the top of houses waiting to see thee.

Show her thy face, considering her to be thy slave.

Bibi Nandan, our sister has no rest without her father.

She weeps bitterly and asks the people when she may expect to embrace the Sat Guru.

One day, while all were seated with their attention fixed on the Guru

Kali Mata with folded hands approached the Guru

She said, "My followers are hungry and need the necessities of life."

On this she was ordered to go in the midst of the Pathans.

Narad was also commanded to excite strife in their country.

The Sat Guru further remarked that the Martyrs had already been sent by him to fetch Russia, with instructions to deliver the order of Akal to her, to compel her to obey it.

Having delivered the Hukam-Nama to the messenger, the Guru asked him to communicate the following message to Russia: "Thou art ordered by God to conquer Lahore for us."

When the Czar held his court, he called his minister, and offering him a seat (told him) that during the night he saw the Khalsa in a vision, at which he was alarmed, as they had asked him to march on Lahore.

The Minister on hearing this, reflected that the journey would prove arduous and hazardous; however, he ordered preparations to be made for the march of the army with drums beating.

When the Russian troops invade the country, agitation will prevail in London, mothers will weep for the sons of their wombs, and wives for their husbands.

Bishen Singh, the Guru's precious jewel and Martyr, who has a large following, has entered into negotiations with others, who have expressed their readiness to join him.

The future rests with God.

The Pathans will rise when they see that the English have withdrawn themselves from Peshawar to defend

Lahore. They will take counsel together but the decree of God will surely be fulfilled.

When Russians enter the Panjab, famine will rage and make havoc in the country.

People will die in terribly large numbers and crime will be without limit.

He alone will be saved who will seek the protection of the Guru and devote his whole attention to God.

The Sat Guru, Ram Singh, the perfect incarnation, has manifested himself. He has by his grace formed the Sant Khalsa.

In the Durbar of Sat Guru, the drum of faith and piety will be beaten.

Faith and piety will prevail in the world, and all will repeat Akal.

So also Chanda Singh lives in Saharan with Diwan Singh.

Believe this Bara Mah of the Sat Guru to be Gur Bilas.

The writer Chanda Singh is one of the humblest slaves, and the congregation is requested to forgive him for his omissions.

Whosoever will read or hear this Bara Mah of the Sat Guru, attentively, will obtain the treasure of Gur-nam (Salvation) and the ... support of the Sat Guru.

Whosoever will shout "Sat-Sri-Akal" will obtain true happiness.

It may be recorded that some of the Kuka prisoners were released in the year 1887. The occasion was that of Queen's Jubilee. Kahan Singh and Hukma Singh were released from the Chunar Fort and Brahma Singh from Moulmein. Kahan Singh who, in his own estimate, was about 76 years of age, was offered freedom on the condition that he would not leave Moulmein.³⁴

In India, the cycle of repression and of atrocities against

³⁴ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 90-93 of February 1887.

the Kukas continued. On 17th March, 1881 the D.S.P. of Ludhiana received information to the effect that about 150 Kukas were assembled for the purpose of holding a secret meeting in the Dhak jungle near village Laton, not far from Bhaini. The Police proceeded to the spot, but only succeeded in arresting 39 persons, under Sections 504, 505, of Criminal Procedure Code. The others escaped. The arrested persons were released on bail. Many of them were required to furnish security of Rs. 1,000. Some others were made over to the Vakils of Patiala, Nabha and Faridkot since they belonged to those places. The names of the arrested were³⁵ :

1. Gurdit Singh Suba (Patiala)
2. Attri (Khanna)
3. Sunder Singh (Patiala)
4. Narain Singh (Patiala)
5. Mehtab Singh (Patiala)
6. Jowala Singh (Patiala)
7. Bhagan w/o Jowala Singh
8. Bhagwan Singh (Nabha)
9. Attar Singh (Nabha)
10. Harnam Singh (Bhaini-Ludhiana)
11. Jai Kaur w/o Harnam Singh
12. Mastan Singh (Ludhiana)
13. Rupam w/o Gurnam Singh (Seheran Majra)
14. Natha Singh Suba (Ferozepore)
15. Sohel Singh (Ferozepore)
16. Rattan Singh (Ferozepore)
17. Sapuran Singh (Ferozepore)
18. Gulab Singh (Ferozepore)

³⁵ Foreign-Political-Secret Progs. 558-599 of January 1882.

KUKAS

19. Anup Singh (Ferozepore)
20. Dharmo w/o Anup Singh
21. Tara Singh (Ferozepore)
22. Chattar Singh (Ferozepore)
23. Lal Singh (Ferozepore)
24. Bholi w/o Lal Singh
25. Wazir Singh (Ferozepore)
26. Sundar Kaur w/o Wazir Singh
27. Sajan Singh (Faridkot)
28. Khushal Singh Suba (Sirsa)
29. Daya Singh (Sirsa)
30. Sher Singh (Malot-Sirsa)
31. Dhian Singh (Sirsa)
32. Bhagwan Singh (Sirsa)
33. Rato w/o Bhagwan Singh
34. Jit Singh (Sirsa)
35. Desan w/o Bhola Singh (Sirsa)
36. Bishan Singh (Karnal)
37. Sundar Singh (Karnal)
38. Shere Singh (Amritsar)
39. Sundar Singh (Nabha)

It seems, by the year 1890, the Government of India had become thoroughly disillusioned about the Kukas. No amount of punishment or persecution seemed of any use. The Editor of the *Ludhiana Dist. Gazetteer* (1888-89) put in the following words regarding the Kukas:

“The truth is that it is not possible for a Kuka to be loyal.”³⁶

³⁶ See p. 69 of the *Ludhiana Dist. Gazetteer* for the years 1888-89.

CHAPTER XIV
CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE DEATH
OF GURU RAM SINGH

Guru Ram Singh was a Person of Vast Powers. His Very
Appearance Bestowed Peace upon the Onlooker.

An Old Burmese Monk

THE SUBJECT OF Guru Ram Singh's death is a controversial one. According to the records, the Namdhari Guru died on 29th November, 1885 at 4-30 P. M.¹

In his communication of 29th November, 1885 the Civil Surgeon reported:

"I beg to report to you the death of the State prisoner Ram Singh, which event has taken place just this moment 4-30 P. M. The man has been in a decline some time past, and with the setting in of the cold weather, he had another attack of Diarrhoea and complained of change very much.

"Another blanket was purchased and added to the other two he already possessed.

"The last attack of Diarrhoea set in on the 22nd, and all endeavours to induce him to take medicine having proved abortive, he was treated with small doses of opium, which he took readily. His diet was completely regulated and nourishment kept up at shorter intervals, his constitution already broken down from old age, frequent attacks of Diarrhoea off and on since the rains of 1883, an attack of general Dropsy in the earlier part of the current year and from general debility, he succumbed to the present attack and died quite exhausted at 4-30 P. M. in my presence, on 29th November 1885."

"P. S. I have to add that the body was cremated this

¹ Report of the Civil Surgeon, Mergui, No. 99, dated the 29th November, 1885. *Vide* Home-Judicial-A Progs. 252-53 of December 1885.

morning, the cremation was commenced at 7-45 and it was completed by 9-05, and that the ashes will be collected from the crematory when it is quite cooled down, placed in new earthen vessel and deposited into the river according to the Hindu custom. This proceeding will, it is said, take place on the morning of the 2nd December when I shall be able to be present to see it carried out."²

On 2nd December, 1885 the Civil Surgeon of Mergui further wrote:

"The ashes were collected and cast into the river in my presence this morning. The cremation and casting off the remains into the river were done very quietly.

"The men selected to perform these offices were two convicts (one of them the attendant and a Brahman and the other a Hindu) and two warders of the Brahman caste belonging to the Jail Guard."³

It is interesting to note that as far back as 11th August, 1884 Guru Ram Singh was reported to be in good health. The following report may be quoted:

"Of the Kooka prisoners, the most important, Ram Singh, is kept in confinement at Mergui. His health during the past year has been fairly good and his conduct much better than usual."⁴

The above report does not agree with the version of the Surgeon. This creates doubts. We also have at our disposal a telegram which was sent by the Rangoon authorities to the authorities at Calcutta on the death of Guru Ram Singh:

Telegram from Rangoon authorities to Calcutta authorities.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 143-145 of January 1886.

⁴ Letter No. 221-226 S. P. dated Rangoon 11th August, 1884. *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 22-24 of September 1884.

Controversy About The Death of Guru Ram Singh

Calcutta

Rangoon

Words: 65.7	Day	Hr.	Min.	} Defd
	8	13	52	

"Ram Singh Kooka State prisoner died at Mergui of Old age, Diarrhoea and General debility on the 29th noon. His remains were burnt according to Hindu custom next morning. His ashes were to be collected, placed in jar and deposited in river. This latter ceremony was to take place on 2nd December after the Mail Steamer. left—Letter follows."⁵

The Kukas refute the reported death of Guru Ram Singh. According to the Kuka version, Guru Ram Singh did not expire in the British jail. They hold that their Guru performed the miracle of escaping from the clutches of his captors towards the end of the year 1885. In their anxiety to absolve themselves of their responsibility, the authorities fabricated the story of the death of Guru Ram Singh. An esteemed Namdhari writer, Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, challenges the story of the Guru's death on the basis of the following facts.⁶

1. According to the above writer, he had the chance to accompany the Kuka leader Satguru Pratap Singhji when he visited Siam in the year 1934. While returning from Bangkok, the party took the steamer bound for Rangoon. The steamer touched Mergui in its course. The Kuka leader and his followers, including the above writer, got down there in order to make inquiries about Guru Ram Singh, the erstwhile state prisoner. The party met an old Sikh living in the suburbs of Mergui, who volunteered the following statement:

"I am about 70 years old now, and for the last twenty years I have been living here and selling milk. I had the chance to inquire about Guru Ram Singh from a very

⁵ *Vide Foreign Internal-B Progs.* 297-310 of December 1885.

⁶ Sant Nidhan Singh Alam, 198-202.

old Burmese monk. He told me that he (Guru Ram Singh) was a person of vast powers, and his very appearance bestowed peace upon the onlooker. At first, he was kept in jail but subsequently he was put up in a Bungalow at the seashore. He was not strictly guarded. One day, he disappeared from captivity and could not be found in spite of best efforts. Perchance, a Dogra prisoner who also bore the name Ram Singh, died suddenly. The authorities took advantage of this situation. They gave out that the Kuka Guru had died, while actually performing the last rites of that Dogra soldier. It was nothing but a political stunt."

2. The height and physique of Satguru Ram Singh was better than Guru Hari Singhji. But, after announcing the death of Guru Ram Singh, the clothes that were returned to Guru Hari Singh by the authorities at Ludhiana were so tight for Guru Hari Singh that he could not wear them. Apparently these clothes belonged to some thin and short-statured person and not Guru Ram Singh.

3. Satguru Hari Singh called upon the authorities to return to him the book from which Satguru Ram Singh used to read the holy verses and also the metallic pot he invariably used. That would, at least, provide some proof in support of what the Government claimed. But the Government could not hand back either of these two things.

4. Sardar Alam Singh S. D. O. (Punjab) publicised in a Namdhari paper *Satjug*, his claim that in the year 1890 he had the privilege of meeting Satguru Ram Singh in Moulmein (Burma), and obtaining his blessings. He challenged the Government to refute his claim but there was no refutation forthcoming.

5. The statements of some of the high officials of the Government of India about the death of Guru Ram Singh are quite conflicting. The Indian Census Report (of Mr.

Maclegan) says Guru Ram Singh died in Rangoon in the year 1887 or 1888.

Lastly, according to the present Kuka sources, a number of Kukas accompanied Guru Ram Singh in the bullock-cart when he left his home in the year 1872 for exile in Burma. In the way, he forewarned his companions again and again not to believe what the British announced about his life or death. He had claimed: "This body can sustain for 250 years." Accordingly, the Kukas firmly believe to this day that their beloved leader Satguru Ram Singh is still alive, and would once again be amidst them in the near future.

CHAPTER XV

AN ESTIMATE OF GURU RAM SINGH

We Have no other Discomfort but the Great Discomfort of Separation from Brethren (Sangat).

GURU RAM SINGH
(*From Exile*)

GURU RAM SINGH occupies a place among those great men of the world who suffered for their convictions and whose sacrifice at the altar of their faith was not merely an isolated event. Like seasoned patriots and sincere leaders, Guru Ram Singh rose to a position of eminence "deed by deed and tear by tear." He possessed a noble disposition and undaunted character. His was the remarkably unique personality whose manliness burnt with the brightest flame in the hour of darkness. During the fourteen years of his exile, Guru Ram Singh did not permit himself to fall into the snake-pit of dejection or desperation. He clung to his ideals firmly and he sustained the vision of his religious glory even in his isolated cell of exile and darkness. He kept his mind and heart illumined with light and hope which can be associated only with unmatched divinity. The whole record of this solitary figure in the field of patriotism and ecclesiastical purity remains unblemished. During those fourteen long winters of exile in Burma, he continued to uphold the flag which he had raised in the year 1857. He persisted in his conviction and ideas under the most trying circumstances, never allowing his vision to be blurred and his zeal to be diminished.

Apart from the political aspirations which he had awakened upto the year 1872, Guru Ram Singh did not forget the endearing and ever-abiding tenets of his religion. He continued to preach the holy doctrines of his sublime faith in his secret communications addressed to his dis-

ciples in the Panjab, from his place of confinement. A number of things emerge clearly about his personality from his letters written from exile. These communications show that politically he was an astute observer of the climate prevailing during the Second Afghan War. Secondly, he comes out as the most uncompromising enemy of the British rule in India. Thirdly, his outstanding belief in the restoration of the Khalsa Rule in the Panjab, is proved beyond doubt. Fourthly, and most predominantly, his anxiety to see that his followers continue to be religious-minded, God-fearing, upright, simple and pure even in his absence, is easily revealed. The last aspect of Guru Ram Singh's personality deserves further notice. It shows that religion was the basis of his patriotism. It also emphasises the fact that Guru Ram Singh felt convinced that if his followers lost touch with religion, they would never be emancipated; consequently, a major portion of his letters from exile was devoted to the religious aspect of the Namdhari movement. Some of these letters may be quoted below as they form the basis of assessing his character and personality.

Religious Preachings of Guru Ram Singh from His Exile

One of the most important things that reveals itself from the lines written by the Guru is his extreme love for his people. In a most self-sacrificing way, he requested his followers again and again to avoid long journeys between India and Burma. He wrote:

"I am in custody, but if any one of my men were to get into trouble, a fresh trouble would be added to my sufferings. I do not know where in that case they will take me . . ."¹

In another letter Guru Ram Singh wrote:

"O Khalsaji! We have no other discomfort but the great discomfort of separation from the brethren (Sangat)."²

¹ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 257-259 of August 1879.

² *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 188-196 of October 1881.

His letters also show that Guru Ram Singh was a man who searched within to find happiness. There is abundant proof of introspection in his writings:

"Now that I suffer discomfort, I have been convinced to seek the sayings of the Guru; when there is suffering the physician is in request. On this principle, when I felt discomfort, I became an inquirer."³

At another place, Guru Ram Singh referred to the importance of Bani and the significance of the Guru Mantar, i. e., the word of the Guru:

"Without the Guru Mantar man is like a pig, the dog, the ass, the snake; for this reason I habitually impress upon you to commit the Bani to memory. I of my own self can write nothing; before commencing my own letter I with folded hands beseech the Guru to inspire me to write whatsoever is pleasing to him. Thus, it is the Guru who dictates while I write to the brethren . . ."⁴

It seems Guru Ram Singh was absolutely confident about salvation in the religious sense through the performance of religious duties. He asked his followers to remember:

"O Khalsaji! be convinced that whoever perseveres in Bani, Nam, Dan, Ashnan, Path and Bhog, his labours will never go unrewarded; for the Guruji has said that the Almighty never permits any labour, even when compared to a *til*-seed, to go unrewarded. . . . O Khalsa! after performing Bhajan and repeating the Bani, stand before the Guru Sahib, with scarfs round your necks, and in abject submission, with folded hands, pray for Gurmat (Guru's Commandments) and Sidak (faith) in the virtues."⁵

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Guru Ram Singh taught politeness and love even towards his enemies. At one place he tells his disciples:

“Do your utmost to help the brethren, even those who are slanderers, for the slanderer and the faithful will each receive his appropriate reward. You should live at peace with all.”⁶

It is important to note that Guru Ram Singh again and again asked his disciples in the Panjab to perform the religious duties. He refused to write many letters because he felt that such letters would absorb his time and thus interfere “with devotions.”⁷ In one letter he gave the following instructions:

“O Khalsa, be firm in your morning worship of the Creator and this and all other discomfort would be removed. Be assured of this truth, for the Guru Sahib has said that ailments can be removed by the worship of the Creator. Continue fervent in reading God’s name or word: ‘Nam’ and ‘Bani’, have a close affinity to one another. By the power of the Nam, several thousand Sikhs have taken to the reading of the Bani. By reading the Bani the beauties of the ‘Name’ of God are discussed. In short, ‘Nam’ and ‘Bani’ are priceless treasures. O Khalsa! the Guru Sahib has been graciously pleased to confer upon you this ‘Nam’ and ‘Bani’; therefore be firm in reciting the ‘Nam’ and ‘Bani’ day and night, whether moving or working, always strive to step forwards never backwards. The present is the time for your amendments....All who recite the name of God will inherit exaltation, joy, perpetual happiness and prosperity. The praises of ‘Nam’ are endless.”⁸

In another letter Guru Ram Singh wrote the following about the true mission of the Namdharis or the Sant Khalsa:

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*



"The Guru is ever with me. This sect alone is the true Sant Khalsa. I am fully convinced that their slanderers will incur the anger of the Guru, who will now take under his protection the Sant Khalsa. God is not far off. Raise your lamentations day and night. Mortals can only cry; he alone can hear and answer."⁹

In another letter, written to his disciples, Guru Ram Singh counselled patience and asked them to seek shelter in the name of God. He said:

"Bear patiently ill-treatment you experience at the hands of the rulers. Perform Bhajan and Bani and pray to the Guru, who is capable of removing all difficulties. Teach your children and do not kill your infant girls, as infanticide is a great sin. Excommunicate those who are cruel enough to put their children to death. Direct people not to take money in consideration of giving their daughters in marriage, and not to exchange girls in marriages. The loan taken on occasions of weddings should be repaid with thanks. The people who do not liquidate their debts will some day reap affliction."¹⁰

He repeats the same teachings in another letter. To those who indulged in the above social vice, Guru Ram Singh uttered the following warning:

"Whoever disregards these instructions, will suffer eternal hunger and nakedness. If a person being a Sikh sells his daughters, he should be entirely cut off."¹¹

Guru Ram Singh laid great stress on counting the beads, in physical cleanliness, bathing, early rising, and patience even with those who talked ill of the Kukas. We find the following sermon in one of his letters:

"Without the use of Malla (woollen rosary) and the

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

observance of prayers, there is no comfort. I see several people merely carrying the rosary, instead of using it. Brother, look at the plough; it is useless unless it is worked. Act in this wise: when at work employ your tongue and when at leisure use the rosary. If any one says any thing harsh or unpleasant do not instantly fly at him but be calm and patient. Never fail to bathe daily at the last watch of the night. I cannot of myself give any orders. Whatever the Guru orders me, I write and tell the Sangat."¹²

In the same letter Guru Ram Singh consoles his brother, Hari Singh, in the following words:

"And brother Hari Singh, do not have ill-feeling against any one. As people act, so they will be rewarded. Whoever wishes ill to the dehra, he is himself lost. Go on with your prayers and worship and continue to feed the hungry, and let the ill-disposed world say what they like against you. And brother do not give the leavings of your food to others, nor accept the leavings of others. Deliver this order also to the Sangat."¹³

He further told his brother:

"Give food, drink, clothing as much as you can to the poor and the hungry....Continue taking God's name with all your strength, as all blessings are derived from it. I searched in vain for comfort everywhere and took to several occupations for this purpose, but when I got under the Guru's protection, I found every comfort... I maintain friendship only with those who devote themselves to prayer and worship."¹⁴

ATTRI AFFAIR

The above teaching can come only from an elevated mind and a noble soul. A mention may also here be made of the

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 257-259 of August 1879.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Attri Affair *vis-a-vis* Guru Ram Singh. This throws a powerful beam of light on the personality and character of this noble leader of the Namdharis.

In the year 1882, the Panjab Government wrote to the Government of India that Attri was an unmarried woman of Jat caste of about 26 years of age. She lived at Khanna. Both her parents were dead. Shortly before Guru Ram Singh was deported in 1872, Attri's guardians proposed to marry her to him, but Guru Ram Singh refused. She was reported to be a clever woman who could read the Granth, recite poetry of her own composition, and openly perform the *bhajan*. She was a good horsewoman. Two years after the deportation of Guru Ram Singh, she gave out that she was the Guru's spiritual betrothed wife. She tried to establish herself at Bhainee, the headquarters of the Kuka sect in Ludhiana, but was invariably sent back by the authorities. Amongst the Kukas she was known as Devi, Sita and Maji.

On 17th March, 1881 the District Supdt. of Police apprehended her while holding a secret meeting in a jungle near Bhainee Sahib. There were 150 Kukas. Many escaped but thirty-nine of them, including Attri, were arrested. Several letters of Guru Ram Singh were found in her possession. The above is a version of the authorities.

In December 1881, the Lt.-Governor of the Panjab received a petition from Attri that she wanted to visit Guru Ram Singh in exile saying that she was separated from her "husband for 11 years."¹⁵ The matter was referred to the authorities in Burma. The Chief Commissioner of Burma sent the following report of Deputy Commissioner, Mergui, to the Government of India:

"I have the honour to state that I visited Ram Singh this morning in company with the Civil Surgeon and asked his wishes in the matter. He replied that Attri was never his wife although she was once offered to him."¹⁶

¹⁵ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 192-193 of April 1882.

¹⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 241-245 of July 1882.

From the translation of paper 9, said to be a letter of the Kuka leader, Guru Ram Singh is reported to have addressed the following words to this woman:

“And to Atrkaur, I have to say this. In the first place I am very old, and my beard has become white. In the second place, I am sitting thousands of miles away in custody beyond the seas. Night and day, I am surrounded by guards armed with muskets. In the day black men, and at night white men guard me. They have no intention of setting me at liberty so long as I am alive. The future is in the hands of the Guru. If you desire a husband, marry the son of a Sikh according to your choice. If you, however, prefer the life of a pure virgin, remain at your house and devote yourself to the worship of God. If possible, avoid seeing a man’s face, and if you thus undertake to worship God, you will obtain a high position hereafter. The matter, however, rests in your hands, you can act as seems best to yourself. I have fully made you acquainted with my state.”¹⁷

From the above writings of Guru Ram Singh, it can easily be concluded that he was a great soul. His nobility and purity of mind besides the courage of his convictions mark him out as a great figure in our history. His role in the revival and resurrection of political life in the Panjab, and religious living of his followers was extremely important. A high credit and appreciation would always be due to him. His place as a freedom-fighter is very high. In the oven of sacrifice and suffering he forged new weapons of struggle for the cause of emancipation of the Motherland. His chief instrument against the Imperialists was Swadeshi and non-co-operation which his followers employed against the rulers right up to the year 1947. Here lies the greatness of his political standing.

¹⁷ *Vide* Home-Judicial-B Progs. 188-195 of October 1881.

CHAPTER XVI

KUKA 'SAKHIS' OR PROPHECIES

There will be such Bloodshed at Peshawar that Horses
will be up to their Girths in Blood.

(A Prophecy)

IT IS EVIDENT from the letters of Guru Ram Singh, written in exile, that the Kukas found these prophecies in the year 1876 in a village Tank at Haripur, in the Sirsa District. The tank became a place of pilgrimage for all the Kukas and it was called: 'Badh Tirath' (big shrine). A number of temples sprang up around this holy tank. All the prophecies related to the Tenth Guru.

The prophecies found at the above Tank are frequently mentioned in the letters of Guru Ram Singh; since it was foretold therein that the Khalsa rule would be restored in the Panjab with the help of Russia, and finally, since many of the actions of the Kukas, such as missions to Central Asia or even their fight against British imperialism, were inspired by these prophecies, a brief reference may be made here to the contents of the 'Sakhis', and the sacredness of the Tank where these were found.

The following story is told in Prophecy No. II about the mythological significance of the holy Tank:

"The true Guru (Guru Govind Singh) after fighting at Muktsar, proceeded towards the south to a place called 'Pathar Thara' in a forest. From thence, he moved to 'Prahlad Sagar' (Badh Tirath) where he made obeisance. Bhai Nand Singh who was with the Guru, remarked: 'This place must be very sacred, since you have bowed here.' The Guru confirmed, and narrated a story to emphasize the importance and sacredness of the Tank. According to the Guru, a notorious robber stayed for three years in the forest near this Tank. He frequently bathed here and drank its water.

He murdered people and plundered their belongings. He was killed by a tiger. After death, on the Day of Judgement, he was ordered to be thrown into fire of hell by 'Dharam Raj'. But the fires of hell (kumbhi-nark) cooled down as soon as he was thrown in. Such was the reward of his having bathed in the tank of 'Sat Prahlad Sagar'. He was finally given a seat in heaven."¹

In the second half of the 19th century, when Guru Ram Singh had already been deported, the Kukas came to learn about the above holy tank, and the valuable prophecies in its bed, quite accidentally. In order that the authenticity of the version given below may not be subject to any doubt, the exact lines of a Political Abstract in the records of the Home Department, Government of India, are reproduced:

"In October 1876, while digging in the bed of the village tank at Haripur, one Charan Das, an Udasi Faqir came upon an iron cage, which fell to pieces when exposed. Inside this cage were found a book (Pothi) which also fell to pieces from decay; a piece of white marble, about 12 inches square, on which were impressions of two small feet, supposed to be those of Guru Nanak when he was a child; two Hukamnamas (orders) by Guru Govind Singh, one of which was perfectly illegible, and the other quite clear and distinct. *The finding of these relics, which were beyond doubt genuine*, as Haripur lies on the road taken by Govind Singh during his flight, was reported to the Deputy Commissioner of Sirsa (Mr. Wakefield) who, knowing Charan Das to be an Udasi and the Haripur villagers to be Vishnois, thought the relics would be safest in the possession of Bhai Naudh Singh, head priest of Guru Govind Singh's temple at Sirsa. He accordingly gave them into Naudh Singh's custody.

"The legible hukamnama bore the seal and signature of Guru Govind Singh, and was worded as follows:

¹ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 217-218 of 8/1882, p. 4, (Secret).

'Daskhati or Mohri Padshahi Das Guru Govind Singh, Sambat Sataran San Chipanja (1700 A.D.). Eko Omkar Satguru Parshad hukamnama Bakshish Kita: Jo Koi Sikh Sikhni, is Charanpat nun manega, jatha shakt pujega, uh nihal hojaiga; jo kai mele te Katak Punoon nun awega, tisnun asi Darshan Dewange. Katak Punun da Vart rakhega, pichhle pehr parshad karega, so nihal howega. Sat kar manna. Daskhat Khas Padshahi Das.'

"The following is the literal translation of the document:

'Signed and sealed by the Tenth Guru, Govind Singh, in Sambat 1756 (1700 A. D.). By the Grace of the one true God, this hukamnama was granted. Whoever (whether Sikh or Sikhni) believes in this foot impression (Charanpat) and worships it, giving offerings according to his means, will be blessed. Whoever comes to the fair on the night of the full moon in the month of Katak (October-November) will see me. Whoever will fast that day and feed the poor in the evening, will be blessed. Believe this to be the truth. Signed by the tenth Guru.'²

According to another version Charan Das, the finder of the relics, retained the real ones, and surrendered only the fake ones to the authorities. He built a temple at the site, and exhibited the relics, including a Pothi (book), a Charanpat (footprints), two hukamnamas (orders of the Guru), an iron quoit, a sword, four arrow heads, and a seal.

The pothi or the book contained the prophecies of Guru Govind Singh about the "appearance of Ram Singh, Kuka Guru," the liberation of the Punjab, and restoration of the Khalsa rule. A brief summary of these Sakhis may be given below.³

WHAT THE SAKHIS FORETOLD

Translation of *Sakhi* No. 1, p. 1:

² *Ibid.*

³ Home-Judicial-B Progs. 217-218 of 8/1882.

1. That in the year 1201 Hijri (1786-87 A. D.) the Khalsa will triumph.
2. That in 1251 Hijri (1835-36 A. D.) the Mahan Malech (the English) will come from another country and establish their rule.
3. The English will go back after ruling for 34 years.
4. The 11th Guru will remain unrecognised; the 12th will be born in the family of Bhais.
5. In 1278 Hijri (1861-62 A. D.) the Sant Khalsa—the name assumed by the Kukas—will be widely extended.
6. Tombs and mosques will be desecrated, and the Sikhs will protect the life of cows.
7. In 1288 Hijri (1871-72 A. D.) the true Guru will be exiled.
8. The 12th Guru will be the most perfect and the greatest; will be born as a carpenter's son; and will begin his devotions at the age of 5.
9. The powerful Christian Raja will send the Guru in exile.
10. Destruction of those who harass the Sikhs.
11. Five years after his banishment the true Guru will speak from his own mouth, i. e. return.
12. His influence will increase in his absence.
13. When the ceremony of Akhand Path has been performed 2½ lakhs of times, the true Guru will return.
14. He will remain many years in exile and will convert the people of the land where he is confined.
15. The sins of the people of Rangoon will be washed away.
16. Bishen Singh (agent at Kabul) will appeal to the Czar of Russia to free the Kukas from the rule of the Mahan Malech (the English).
17. Russia will stop the road to India.

18. War between Russia and Turkey predicted.

Page 3:

19. Russia will advance on the Panjab.
20. The Russians will conquer the mountain tract, in 1295 Hijri (1877-78 A. D.)
21. In 1297 Hijri (1879-80 A. D.) Russia will enter the Madar Des (Panjab).
22. Panjab will be restored by the Russians to the Sikhs after one year.
23. About the time of this war the True Guru (Ram Singh) will return.
24. All people will enjoy peace under the Khalsa Raj.
25. G. Ram Singh will become the master of Delhi and the King of India.
26. Bishen Singh and other absentees will meet again.
27. The Sikh kingdom will increase in power and conquer the foreign island (England).
28. The people of the foreign island will fall at Ram Singh's feet.
29. Whoever will not believe these prophecies is to be cut off from the congregation.
30. Religious war foretold.
31. All this will come to pass at the end of the 13th Muhammadan Century, after the year 1393 Hijri (1876 A. D.) has passed.

Sakhi No. II, p. 3:

1. The great sanctity of the Prahlad Sagar (i.e. Badh Tirath Tank at Haripur) in the Sirsa District.

Page 4:

2. The Khalsa Raj will be established in the time of the 12th Guru.

3. For pulling down tombs and mosques and protecting kine, 80 persons will lose their lives.
4. There will be such bloodshed at Peshawar that horses will be up to their girths in blood.
5. The same will occur at Lahore, and battles will also take place at Dehra Dun, Kabul, Jammu, Jamrud, Peshawar, Lahore, Firozpur, and Ludhiana.
6. High and low alike will be slain and there will be great confusion throughout the world. At 21½ miles from Delhi, all the rajas will die, and Ram Singh will rule, and all will bow before him. This Ram Singh will be son of a carpenter.

Page 5:

7. The Guru will return to Badh Tirath where all the Khalsas will take up their abode.
8. The Golden age will return with Ram Singh's reign.
9. Hindus and Muslims will both be converted to the Kooka faith.
10. The Christians will be destroyed in 1297 Hijri (1879-80 A. D.) and the Muhammedan power will wane.

Sakhi No. III

1. There will be 14 Badshahs in all.
2. The 12th incarnation will destroy the Muhammdans; will take up his residence on the banks of the Sutlej and recover the Sikh treasure lost in that river.

Page 6:

3. Will establish his rule on the banks of Sarju (the Gogra) in 1297 (1879-80 A. D.).
4. Asurs (demons i.e. the English) will be destroyed, only the 4 classes of Hindus will remain.
5. The Guru will travel round the world.

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6. Great misfortunes and slaughter will occur in the hills and to the North.
7. Many will die of sickness. Darkness will prevail over Hindustan.
8. A calamity will befall from the east and the ruler of India will be taken prisoner.
9. Arabia will be deserted.

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“I think the existence and extensive circulation of these Sakhis show only too clearly how disaffected to our rule the Kukas are.”

D. E. McCracken

Lahore
31-3-1882

Asst. to the I. G. of Police
Punjab, Special Branch.

The above Sakhis were obtained by Mr. Warburton from Ishar Singh Kuka in 1879 who turned a Government secret agent. At that time the Sakhis were in wide circulation among the Kukas and were implicitly believed by them. The Kukas had committed these prophecies to memory. The above Sakhis were rendered into English with the help of Police Inspector Aya Singh of the Special Branch who was a good Gurmukhi scholar. Sardar Attar Singh, C.I.E. of Bhadaur told the authorities that these Sakhis were invented by Warriam Singh Kuka (of Kahn Singhwala).

In brief, these Sakhis foretold:

- (1) The rise of the Kuka Sect,
- (2) incarnation of the 12th Guru,
- (3) expulsion of the Mahan Malech, and
- (4) Kukas getting help from Russia.

These Sakhis may have helped the Kukas by stimulating their courage and confidence in the role assigned to them.

But their historical value is meagre. In fact, it is firmly and widely believed by the Namdharis (Kukas) that the material contained in these Sakhis (prophecies), although in many points genuine and correct, has yet "been frequently and thoroughly tampered with by the designing imperialists" so as to render them into a hotchpotch of history and fiction. This was done by them to spread a demoralising confusion in the rank and file of the Namdhari patriots.

There seems to be ample justification for their belief. For example, it was bound to be of great advantage to the imperialists to include in the Sakhis (prophecies) a fixed date for restoration of the Khalsa rule. After a time, they were, then, in a position to confound and demoralise the Kukas by pointing out that the above prophecies turned out to be false.

CHAPTER XVII

KUKAS OF NOTE

(up to 31st December 1880)

When he was Converted, this Man gave up Worldly Pursuits, and became a Worshipper

(*Typical Case of a Kuka—
from Records*)

THE AUTHORITIES maintained a carefully verified record of the activities of prominent Kukas in the Panjab. From the long list¹ of Kukas the names mentioned below have been reproduced. These Kukas sacrificed their properties, or gave up their settled lives, or were arrested by the Government, or were called upon to furnish heavy securities—all for their faith and mission. Some lost their jobs, others auctioned all their worldly assets to feed their Kuka brothers and to plunge whole-heartedly in the movement, whereas some were deported from India. This is, in fact, a Roll of Honour, but it cannot be considered in any way exhaustive. It contains the following categories:

- (1) Those who were arrested, persecuted or exiled.
- (2) Those who sacrificed their properties.
- (3) Those who left their homes for their mission.
- (4) Those who undertook the journey to Burma to meet Guru Ram Singh.
- (5) Some influential Kukas or Subas.

SUDH SINGH SUBHA

s/o Ram Singh, vill. Mandhar Dist. Ambala—age 50 years.

“He was converted to the Kuka faith at the same time as Guru Ram Singh, by Balak Singh of Huzro, Rawalpindi. He was made a Suba by Ram Singh about the year 1870,

¹ Home-Judicial-B Progs. 186-189, April 1881.

and was held in high estimation by the sect....He was a quiet, well-behaved and inoffensive man."

HIRA SINGH, ALIAS 'LAMBU', SUBA

s/o Kirpal Singh, vill. Sandhaura p. o. Sandhaura—age 45 years.

He was highly respected by the Kukas. He was formerly in the service of the Maharaja of Kashmir, and was with Guru Ram Singh at Bhaini during the outbreak of 1872. He was arrested and made to furnish security in the sum of Rs. 500. He repeatedly petitioned Government to be allowed to visit Guru Ram Singh at Rangoon; but was always refused permission. He visited Rangoon in August 1880, in company with Lal Singh of Latala (Ludhiana Dist.) and others. When returning he was arrested at Calcutta on 1st November 1880.

SARDAR MANGAL SINGH

s/o Hira Singh (Jagirdar) of Patiala—age 38 years.

He was formerly a Rissaldar in the service of the Patiala State, the late Maharaja being his nephew. He was involved in the Malerkotla disturbance in 1872, and was arrested by the Patiala authorities and made over to the British Government. The British exiled him to Allahabad, whence he returned in 1872 on release. He was a man of influence, and was secretly visited by the members of the sect.

ATTAR SINGH SUBA

s/o Budhu P. S. Dehlon—age 48 years.

He sold away all his landed property, and roamed about accompanied by his daughters for the propagation of the Kuka faith. In March 1875, he was persecuted for openly using seditious language and for being involved in an "unlawful" assembly. He was sentenced to nine months imprisonment and Rs. 200 fine.

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KALA SINGH ALIAS MASTANA

s/o Dewa Singh P. S. Dehlon.

When he was converted, he sold all his property and became a missionary. In Guru Ram Singh's time he used to go about the streets with a drawn knife, threatening to kill any one whom he might find smoking. The authorities considered him a dangerous man, and in June 1874, he was called upon to furnish a security of Rs. 600. He was imprisoned for six months as he failed to furnish the security.

BABA RAI SINGH

s/o Natha Singh of Dehlon—age 45.

On 14th January 1875 he was required to furnish a security in the sum of Rs. 200, and in default, was imprisoned for a year. He also suffered imprisonment for nine months under Section 143, Indian Penal Code.

NARAIN SINGH SUBA

s/o Sangat Singh P. S. Dehlon

He was considered by the Government as a "most seditious character." He remained away from his home for years and the authorities failed to keep track of his movements.

KALA SINGH ALIAS SANTA SINGH

s/o Dula P. S. Dehlon — age 50.

He sold away all his landed property and shifted to Baba Budh Singh's Dera at Bhaini.

KHAZAN SINGH THANADAR

s/o Bya of P. S. Dèhlon — age 50.

He mortgaged his land to his brother, and went to live at Bhaini.

JAIMAL SINGH

s/o Buta Singh vill. Bhaini, P. S. Sahnewal — age 60.

He was formerly a Lambardar of Raipur, P. S. Dehlon. On 11th November, 1873 he was required to furnish a security in the sum of Rs. 1,000, and in default, he was imprisoned for a year. "He sold all the land he possessed in Raipur, saying that he did not care for it, as he would regain it when the Kukas came into power." He was kept by Guru Hari Singh in his kitchen.

DARBARA SINGH SUBA

s/o Mehtab Singh, vill. Bhaini, P. S. Sahnewal — age 55.

He was considered as "an influential and ill-disposed man, and a bigoted Kuka". He was originally a Lambardar of Raipur, but he parted with his profession and all the property "for the sake of his religion." In September 1873, he was convicted, and in 1875 he was required to furnish security in the sum of Rs. 1,000.

BABA BUDH SINGH

s/o Jassa Singh (Carpenter)

Bhaini P. S. Sahnewal — age about 57.

"Is the younger brother of Guru Ram Singh, and is now considered his representative and head of the sect. He admits, converts, and performs all the offices which appertained to Ram Singh. He has considerable influence."²

JOWAHIR SINGH

s/o Gurdial of vill. Takhran, P. S. Machiwara — age 50.

The authorities consider him influential and a "bigoted Kuka." He was reported to be extremely intolerant towards people of other religions. He read the Granth, and visited Bhaini frequently.

ATTAR SINGH LAMBARDAR

s/o Sital Singh, vill. & P. S. Machiwara — age 42.

The authorities regarded him somewhat responsible

² *Vide Government of India Records 12/1880.*

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for the attack on Malerkotla in 1872. He was reported to be a close friend of Guru Ram Singh and was, consequently, held in high esteem by the Kukas. He was then on intimate terms with Baba Budh Singh. He was a staunch Kuka and exerted greatly for the Kuka cause. The authorities regarded him of "turbulent and factious disposition."

KHAZAN SINGH

s/o Mohra, vill. Kamalpur. P. S. Jagraon—age 40

He made great exertions in the cause of Kukaism and its propagation.

BASAWA SINGH

s/o Dasaunda Singh

vill. Siahar. P. S. Dehlon—age 42.

On 15th January, 1875 he was tried for being a member of an unlawful assembly, and was convicted under Section 505, Act X of 1872, and required to furnish security in the sum of Rs. 200. Failing to pay the security, he was sentenced to 9 months' imprisonment on 2-3-1875.

LAL SINGH JAMADAR

s/o Gopal Singh Lambardar

vill. Siahar. P. S. Dehlon—age 38.

On 15th January 1875 he was asked to furnish a security in the sum of Rs. 200. He was imprisoned for 9 months.

BELA SINGH

s/o Kaula vill. Siahar. P. S. Dehlon — age 55.

He was a close confidant of "Guru Ram Singh" who often stayed in his house.

CHARAT SINGH

s/o Jhabba

vill. Maihma Singhwala. P. S. Dehlon—age 50.

The British Government regarded him as "an ill-disposed bigoted Kuka." On 11-9-1872 he was required to furnish a security in the sum of Rs. 1,200, under Section 505 of Act X of 1872.

MEHTAB SINGH *s/o Basawa Singh*
vill. Lohgarh. P. S. Dehlon—age 45.

On 21st March, 1874, he was called upon to furnish a security of Rs. 1,000. He sold all his personal effects and did not keep a fixed place of residence. He frequently stayed with Baba Budh Singh and always foretold the establishment of the Kuka Raj.

PANJAB SINGH
s/o Basawa Singh
vill. Lohgarh. P. S. Dehlon.

He was a famous Kuka who always predicted that the Kuka rule would supersede that of the English. He disposed of all his property and fed Kukas with the proceeds.

DIP SINGH
s/o Jowahir Singh. village Lohgarh. P. S. Dehlon—age 35.

SAHIB SINGH ALIAS KARARA SINGH
s/o Kesra Singh. vill. Lohgarh. P. S. Dehlon—age 55.

Both the above Kukas took part in the attack on Malerkotla.

SAWAN SINGH
s/o Kumar Singh
vill. Lohgarh. P. S. Dehlon — age 55.

He took part in the raid on Malerkotla in January 1872. His son Gurdit Singh was employed in the 5th Native Infantry. He and all the members of his family believed that if they sacrificed their lives in the Kuka cause they were "sure to gain heaven."

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JIWAN SINGH

s/o Garha Singh

vill. Lohgarh. P. S. Dehlon.

He was a well-known Kuka who went to Malerkotla with the Kukas in January 1872.

LAL SINGH

s/o Gurdial Singh

vill. Latala. P. S. Dehlon—age 40.

He went to see "Guru Ram Singh" at Rangoon in the year 1880 from where he returned in the month of June 1880. He was possibly the bearer of important letters from Guru Ram Singh. He again visited Guru Ram Singh at Rangoon in August 1880, in company with Mahant Hira Singh alias 'Lambu'. When he was returning he was arrested on 1st November 1880 at Calcutta. After being released in the Panjab, he continued to visit Baba Budh Singh at Bhaini frequently.

BADHAWA SINGH *s/o Devi Ditta*

vill. Ghunghrana. P. S. Dehlon — age 50.

"In 1871, he was tried and sentenced to 6 years' rigorous imprisonment for dangerously wounding a man with an axe at Kohara P. S. Sahnewal, in a religious discussion." In Government records he is referred to as "a well-known and dangerous character."

CHAIN SINGH

s/o Dhanna Singh

vill. Gujarwal. P. S. Dehlon — age 55.

He acted as a Kuka messenger. He was suspected to have visited Rangoon to see Guru Ram Singh because he could not account for his disappearance for a period of full one year.

KALA SINGH

s/o Budh Singh

vill. Gujarwal. P. S. Dehlon — age 55.

He sold away all his property and made a present of Rs. 100 to Guru Ram Singh, and with the remainder of the proceeds he fed a number of Kukas.

BUDH SINGH

s/o Mohar Singh

vill. Gujarwal. P. S. Dehlon — age 70.

He was a disciple of "Balak Singh" of Hazro. He and Budh Singh were considered as 'Gurbhais'. Guru Ram Singh had appointed him as a Suba.

SAMAND SINGH JAMADAR

s/o Bhup Singh

vill. Gujarwal. P. S. Dehlon — age 56.

"When he was converted, this man gave up worldly pursuits and became a worshipper. In Guru Ram Singh's time he used to foretell the establishment of the Kuka Raj. He was invariably present at Kuka meetings. He accompanied Budh Singh when the latter visited Lohgarh in 1875, and Muktsar in 1877."

ATTAR SINGH

s/o Khazan Singh of Ludhiana — age 30.

The authorities regarded him "a very plotting character" who was in the confidence of Budh Singh. He was reported to be sending communications of all kinds to Bhaini Sahib. He was consulted in all matters discussed at Bhaini. He dealt in grains.

BIBI BHOLI

of Ludhiana — age 50.

"This woman is related to 'Guru Ram Singh', and is consequently much respected by the sect who style her 'Mai' or mother. She performs the Bhajan ceremony and

her house is a rendezvous for Kukas visiting Ludhiana."³

SAHIB SINGH LAMBARDAR

s/o Bahadar

vill. Bagli Kalan. P. S. Khanna — age 50.

"This man is reported to be ill-disposed; but, being a Lambardar, he has to hide his real feelings and to affect goodwill towards the Government. He attends Kuka assemblies and is intolerant to those who profess a religion different to his own."⁴

BUDH SINGH ALIAS ATTAR SINGH *s/o Sukha Singh*

vill. Bagli Kalan. P. S. Khanna — age 40.

"He sold all his landed and other property and distributed the proceeds at Bhaini." The authorities describe him as "quarrelsome and intolerant."

MEKH SINGH

s/o Bir Singh

vill. Phamde. P. S. Khanna — age 45.

"This man sold all his property and gave the proceeds to Baba Budh Singh of Bhaini. . . . He acts as a messenger."

KHARAK SINGH ALIAS KHARKU

s/o Mohar Singh of Khanna — age 35.

He was frequently visited by Kukas "from all parts of the country." He used to foretell the overthrow of the British Government and the establishment of the Sikh Raj.

LAKHA SINGH *s/o Ratal*

vill. Faizgarh. P. S. Khanna — age 32.

He was considered a very turbulent character by the Government, who would join in any disturbance against the English. He used to prophesy that "Guru Ram Singh" will return and reign over the country. He always maintain-

³ *Vide Records.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

ned that the Guru was not in confinement, but was staying in Rangoon of his own free will.

MAN SINGH

s/o Hamir Singh

vill. Haryana. P. S. Khanna — age 45.

“This man sold all his property and gave the proceeds to Baba Budh Singh of Bhaini. He now wanders from place to place and acts as a messenger.”⁵

MESA SINGH ALIAS MASTANA

s/o Mohra

vill. Burj Hari Singh. P. S. Raikot — age 30.

He sold away all his landed property and settled down at the Kuka headquarters, i.e. Bhaini Sahib.

CHAICHAL SINGH

s/o Makhan Singh

vill. Bhotna. P. S. Shaihna — age 67.

“He sold all his landed property.” The authorities kept a close watch on his movements.

NARAIN SINGH

s/o Dewa Singh

vill. Rodah. P. S. Bagah Purana — age 36.

In June 1879, he started for Rangoon and, on his return was arrested on the 17th of July. Several letters purporting to be from “Guru Ram Singh” were found on him. Probably he was created a Suba by the order of Guru Ram Singh (from exile).

SAMAND SINGH SUBA

s/o Sadha Singh

vill. Khote. P. S. Nihal Singhwala — age above 50.

Guru Ram Singh renewed his title from his exile. He

⁵ Government Records.

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assisted the sect from his own resources and was looked up to by the Kukas.

JOWAHIR SINGH SUBA

vill. Bilaspur. P. S. Nihal Singhwala — age 50.

He was deported with Guru Ram Singh in 1872. He owned land and was well off.

MAN SINGH SUBA *s/o Makhan Singh.*

vill. Saidoki. P. S. Nihal Singhwala — age 50.

He was well off, but sold his land and helped Guru Ram Singh and co-religionists with the proceeds. In 1872, he was deported along with Guru Ram Singh.

HARNAM SINGH NAIB SUBA

s/o Dip Singh of P. S. & vill. Nathana — age 38.

In July 1880 a party of about 25 Kukas left for Rangoon under his leadership. They reached their destination on 27th July, 1880. One of the members of this party was arrested in the act of communicating with Guru Ram Singh, and thereupon Harnam Singh returned to the Panjab, reaching home on 14th August, 1880.

KHAZAN SINGH SUBA

s/o Bani of vill. Lidhana Jhikh P. S. Bangeh — age 50.

He was an influential man whose field of work was in Ludhiana and Bhaini.

LABH SINGH SUBA

s/o Taihla

vill. Durgapur. P. S. Rahon — age 37.

He was made a Suba by Guru Ram Singh, and was greatly respected by the sect. He lived in the Kuka Dharamsala at Amritsar.

SARDAR MAN SINGH

s/o Bhag Singh

vill. Pur Hiran. P.S. Hoshiarpur — age 44.

He was amongst the first of Guru Ram Singh's disciples. The authorities felt: "Man Singh is an earnest Kuka and frequently celebrates the 'Bhog' and 'Hom' ceremonies...."

NAINA SINGH (*Mahunt*)

s/o Samand Singh, vill. Varyah. P. O. Sarhali.

He visited Rangoon in the year 1877, and saw Guru Ram Singh. The authorities considered him as "an active Kuka" and "a dangerous character."

DEWA SINGH SUBA

s/o Sobha Singh

vill. & P. S. Lahore — age 58.

He was created a Suba in 1871 by Guru Ram Singh. In May 1872, he was arrested and sentenced to a term of rigorous imprisonment. Kukas from all parts of the country visited him and held secret consultations. He foretold the restoration of the Sikh rule.

DIWAN BUTA SINGH

s/o Gurdial Singh

vill. & P. S. Lahore City — age 55.

He was in the service of Maharaja Dalip Singh's mother. During the fighting at Multan he was found to be in league against the British and was put under surveillance. On the annexation of the Panjab, he was imprisoned in the Allahabad Fort for 7 years. He returned to Lahore in 1866, and established a press for the publication of a law-journal called *Anwar-ul-Shams*. In 1872, the first issue of the *Aftab-i-Panjab* (newspaper) was published by him. He had branches of his press in Peshawar and Ajmer. He knew Gurmukhi and Persian. Since Guru Ram Singh's arrest, Buta Singh had not professed Kukaism openly, but he secretly associated with members of the sect. He was a very well-to-do man and entertained the Kukas at his place. It may be added from the Namdhari sources that

KUKAS

Diwan Buta Singh was the pioneer in publishing *Granth Sahib* in Gurmukhi script under instructions of Sat Guru Ram Singh.

MAKHAN SINGH (*Mahunt*)

s/o Mutsadda Singh of Lahore City — age 50.

He travelled from village to village, collecting alms. He was arrested and convicted. He foretold the restoration of the Khalsa rule.

FATTEH SINGH SUBA

s/o Khazan Singh

vill. P. S. Valtoha — age 45.

He was considered by the authorities as possessing “a turbulent character.” He was made a Suba in November 1879. He foretold the restoration of the Sikh rule.

SANGAT SINGH

s/o Duma Singh of Montgomery — age 25.

He was formerly enlisted in the police on 5th October, 1874. But he took to singing songs connected with the Kuka uprising of 1872, in which action taken by the authorities was condemned. He was dismissed and called upon to furnish a suitable security, failing which he was sentenced to simple imprisonment for one year.

SARDAR LEHNA SINGH

s/o Kahn Singh

vill. Garjakh Gujranwala — age 55.

He was the son-in-law of the famous Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, the General of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Lehna Singh used to preside over Kuka meetings convened by himself. He was a “Rais.”

TARA SINGH

s/o Attar Singh of vill. Misrimaini P. S. Gujranwala — age 55.

He was the nephew of the late Colonel Mian Singh, who was Governor of Peshawar in the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and who was a military leader of some note. Tara Singh was appointed Adjutant of the two Companies of Kukas which were raised in the State of Kashmir in 1871 and disbanded in the early part of 1872.

KAHN SINGH

(*Bhav*) s/o *Mana Singh*

vill. & P. S. Hazro — age 40.

He was the nephew of Guru Balak Singh, who was Guru Ram Singh's Guru. He was then acknowledged as the head of the Hazro Kukas. He read the Granth morning and evening at the Dharamsala near the place where his uncle's (Guru Balak Singh's) remains were burnt. He occasionally held Kuka meetings which were attended by "men from all parts."

MALUK SINGH⁶

He became a Kuka in the year 1864, and after two years was made a Suba. In 1869 a band of some 50 Kukas having collected their goods and cash into a common store at Maluk Singh's village, proceeded to Thirajpur, a village on the borders of Sirsa, and there declared the English rule at an end. Simultaneously, they declared the beginning of the Khalsa rule. Two British officers with a party of Police apprehended Maluk Singh and other Kukas.

⁶ *Vide* Home-Judicial Progs. 92-95 of October 1886.

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